

Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church

Sunday 3rd May 2020 The Fourth Sunday of Easter

To be able to access the links, go to the bottom of this page and left click on the date. This will download the pdf in a new window, then simply click on the links as indicated.

Welcome

Today is the fourth Sunday of Easter and so we continue to focus on the events that followed the resurrection of Jesus.

Psalm 95:6 & 7

*O come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
For he is our God,
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.*

Prayer of Praise, Confession, Assurance of Forgiveness and

Lord's Prayer

Loving God, you are the eternal King, your majesty is beyond measure, your power beyond our understanding. You are exalted above all. You are the creator who made the universe. Everything in heaven and on earth is yours.



But, like lost sheep, we have strayed from you and your ways. We have been too focused on our own desires following our own paths, seeking our own pasture. We have done those things which are contrary to your will, causing you pain and sadness; and we have failed to love and care for one another, to be forgiving, and to bring peace. We have ignored your voice, failing to live in the ways you have taught us, failing to love you and our neighbour, failing to do all that we should have done that would have brought you glory, reflected your love, and given blessing to others. We are sorry and ask your forgiveness.

But you are a good shepherd who cares for his flock. You promise to bring us back from the places to which we have scattered. Hear the cry of your sheep and return us to your fold; that we may graze on the richness of your pasture.

We thank you for sending your Son to be our Saviour. We thank you that he died for the forgiveness of our sin, conquering death and rising to new life.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit to guide us, correct us and equip us to live in new ways of service. We pray in the name of Jesus our risen Lord and Saviour who gave us the great family prayer of the church...

Our Father, in heaven, holy is your name. Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sin as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom the power and the glory for ever. Amen.

Song [The Lord's my shepherd](#) *Click on the link*



A Prayer for this time of Coronavirus

Lord Jesus, who cares for the flock, at this time of infection and isolation we pray;

for all who have contracted the virus, sustain bodies and spirits, and bring healing;

for the young and the strong, give them the necessary restraint to keep them from unwittingly spreading this disease;

for all who feel isolated, anxious, and helpless, provide them every necessary support;

for people facing financial hardship, relieve anxiety and stress;

for people whose regular therapies and treatments are postponed, grant them resilience to remain positive;

for elected officials and their scientific advisors, give them knowledge and wisdom to make good and informed judgements;

for all seeking longer term solutions, grant them insight, understanding and intuition, perseverance and tenacity;

for journalists, that they may report with appropriate care and consideration without causing panic;

for frontline health care workers and all who take care of the frail who cannot care for themselves we thank you for their service, keep them safe and healthy;

for the care of family and friends who keep in touch we thank you;

for all who continue to work providing for our daily needs of food, power, communication and all other essentials, we thank you.

Loving Jesus, we thank you that you are with us in our time of need. Amen.



Bible Passages

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God tells his faithful people that he will be a shepherd to them.

Ezekiel 34: 11-16 (CEV)

¹¹The LORD God then said:

I will look for my sheep and take care of them myself, ¹²just as a shepherd looks for lost sheep. My sheep have been lost since that dark and miserable day when they were scattered throughout the nations. But I will rescue them ¹³and bring them back from the foreign nations where they now live. I will be their shepherd and will let them graze on Israel's mountains and in the valleys and fertile fields. ¹⁴They will be safe as they feed on grassy meadows and green hills. ¹⁵I promise to take care of them and keep them safe, ¹⁶to look for those that are lost and bring back the ones that wander off, to bandage those that are hurt and protect the ones that are weak. I will also slaughter those that are fat and strong, because I always do right.

Our Gospel reading is about another resurrection appearance of Jesus. He meets the disciples on the beach beside Lake Galilee. Our focus will be on a conversation between Jesus and Peter.

John 21:1-19 (CEV)

Jesus later appeared to his disciples along the shore of Lake Tiberias.

²Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, and the brothers James and John,^[a] were there, together with two other disciples. ³Simon Peter said, "I'm going fishing!"

The others said, "We will go with you." They went out in their boat. But they didn't catch a thing that night.

⁴Early the next morning Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize who he was. ⁵Jesus shouted, "Friends, have you caught anything?"

"No!" they answered.

⁶So he told them, "Let your net down on the right side of your boat, and you will catch some fish."

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They did, and the net was so full of fish that they could not drag it up into the boat.

⁷ Jesus' favourite disciple told Peter, "It's the Lord!" When Simon heard that it was the Lord, he put on the clothes that he had taken off while he was working. Then he jumped into the water. ⁸ The boat was only about a hundred yards from shore. So the other disciples stayed in the boat and dragged in the net full of fish.

⁹ When the disciples got out of the boat, they saw some bread and a charcoal fire with fish on it. ¹⁰ Jesus told his disciples, "Bring some of the fish you just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter got back into the boat and dragged the net to shore. In it were one hundred fifty-three large fish, but still the net did not rip.

¹² Jesus said, "Come and eat!" But none of the disciples dared ask who he was. They knew he was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus took the bread in his hands and gave some of it to his disciples. He did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This was the third time that Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from death.

¹⁵ When Jesus and his disciples had finished eating, he asked, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than the others do?"

Simon Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know I do!"

"Then feed my lambs," Jesus said.

¹⁶ Jesus asked a second time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter answered, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you!"

"Then take care of my sheep," Jesus told him.

¹⁷ Jesus asked a third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus had asked him three times if he loved him. So, he told Jesus, "Lord, you know everything. You know I love you."

Jesus replied, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ I tell you for certain that when you were a young man, you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will hold out your hands. Then others will wrap your belt around you and lead you where you don't want to go."

¹⁹ Jesus said this to tell how Peter would die and bring honour to God. Then he said to Peter, "Follow me!"

Song [Loving shepherd of thy sheep](#) [Click on the link](#)

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is something many of us live with on a daily basis. However, I'm not talking about an arm of government but rather exactly what Jesus calls us to. We know of the parable of the sower and that Jesus referred to himself as a seed that died giving life to many other seeds. He even spoke of the harvest being plentiful but the workers few when he sent out the seventy-two into the towns and villages. When Jesus called the disciples to follow him, he said he would make them 'fishers of men.' Now we find they are not only to be fishermen but shepherds too; and they are to feed God's faithful people with the bread of life. AS Jesus' disciples we are called to a ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food.

The disciples were back in Galilee. According to Mark, Mary had been told, when at the empty tomb; "go, tell his disciples and Peter, "He [Jesus] is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you" (Mark 16: 7). We know, from John, that it was a week after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to Thomas in Jerusalem. The disciples must then have returned to Galilee and went fishing, whilst they were waiting for Jesus to appear again. Hanging around waiting, particularly when we do not know how long we may have to wait is frustrating and can be stressful. (We know that in these times of isolation.)

Jesus was waiting for the disciples on the shore with a charcoal fire cooking a fish breakfast. He had a special conversation with Peter.

A long time before, Jesus had given Simon a new name. He was to be Cephas, or Peter, meaning 'the rock'. Peter was to be a rock, someone firm and strong in faith; someone who would support Jesus and the faithful. Jesus had even promised him that he would be given the keys of the Kingdom (Matthew 16:19). Peter had been a firm believer, the first to declare Jesus as "The Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Around the Last Supper table Peter had committed himself; "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." Peter, the rock, would stand firm against all adversity, hardship and danger.

But, Jesus knew the rock would crack. Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me." (Luke 22:33-34) Then, just a few hours later, when Jesus was on trial, Peter was in the courtyard of the High Priest, Ananias, warming himself by a charcoal fire. Three times he was accused of knowing Jesus, of being one of his followers. Three times Jesus denied it; and the cock crowed. (See John 18.)

By the lake, Peter stood by another charcoal fire. (The Greek word for "charcoal fire", "*Anthrakia*", occurs only on these two occasions in the whole New Testament.) Its smell would have raised Peter's senses taking him back to his time at Ananias' house. Three times he denied Jesus, now Jesus asks three times, "do you love me?". Three times Peter responds, "I love you, Jesus".

Between the two charcoal fires, the one in the courtyard and the one on the shore, between Peter's denials and his restoration, Jesus had been to the cross. There he had died for the forgiveness of Peter's sin, for the forgiveness of your sin and for the forgiveness of my sin. Jesus made peace for us with God.

True forgiveness trusts. By the lake side Jesus did not simply tell Peter he was forgiven but committed the continuation of his own mission, into Peter's hands. The forgiveness Jesus gives is all embracing, made real and demonstrative by his choosing Peter to be a shepherd; "Feed my sheep", Jesus said - three times. The Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep and Peter is one of them, now brought back to the flock, reinstated within the fold - Jesus has total, unwavering trust in him.

Jesus clearly had a special reason for singling-out Peter, but the task Peter is given is not one he can fulfil on his own. He will become, for a while at least, the chief figure in the Church, but all the disciples would, under Peter's oversight, have a role in shepherding.

Eventually Peter died, but the role of shepherding continued and was handed on, and down, through the ages to our present day. Today we all, as disciples of Jesus, have a role in shepherding and feeding the flock.

Following his resurrection Jesus knew he would soon ascend to heaven. He is concerned about the flock and so associated each of his resurrection appearances with a command to mission and ministry. Mary was to go and tell the other disciples; they were sent, "as the Father has sent me" (John 20:21). Thomas was assured, not only of his own blessing, but the blessing others will receive from being brought to Jesus even though they would not see like Thomas had seen. Jesus' appearance by the lake and his calling to the disciples to cast their nets over the right side of the boat is a reminder that he calls his followers to be fishers of men and women. Finally, Peter's commission to "feed my sheep" is another call to mission. Peter rose to the challenge taking on the role of shepherd, overseeing and guiding the infant church.

But was Jesus only speaking to Peter?

As disciples of Jesus we too are called - to sow seeds, to be fishers of men and women and to shepherd the flock, feeding them with the bread of life. We are called to a ministry of agriculture, fisheries and food.

Our role as shepherds is to help people find the lush pastures of Holy Scripture, to unwrap them and encourage their consumption. We are to feed Jesus' lambs with the bread of life, through word and action, giving them the spiritual nourishment they need to grow in faith.

Just as the Father had sent the Good Shepherd so he sends each generation of faithful followers to raise the next.

So, here are three questions for us to reflect upon.

1. Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" It is not clear who 'these' are. Did Jesus mean, 'do you love me more than these other disciples with whom you have been fishing?', or did he mean, 'do you love me more than these things,

your fishing boats, your livelihood, will you give it all up for me?' Perhaps Jesus meant, "Do you love me more than these other disciples love me?' Jesus asks us that question too – 'do you love me more than these?' whatever 'these' may be for each of us. Is our love for Jesus our first love? Does he take first place? Is he where our treasure is?

2. What does being a shepherd of Jesus' flock look like in 21st century Scotland? Today, sheep farmers drive their sheep with dogs and make them go where they do not want to go. In first century, Judea shepherds led their sheep. How might you and I more effectively lead the sheep to green pastures? If Jesus, The Good Shepherd, forgave Peter's threefold denial, what does that teach us, as shepherds of the sheep, about our need to forgive?
3. Jesus said that the Good Shepherd gives up his life for the sheep. (John 10:11) As God's 21st century shepherds, what does it mean for us to love sacrificially, as Christ loves us?

Click on the link below and as you listen to the music ponder these questions. Continue to reflect upon them throughout the coming week.

[Sheep may safely graze J S Bach](#) **Click on the link**

Prayer

We stand before you Lord with hands wide open ready to receive you.
We offer to you Lord, our modest gifts like tiny seeds not knowing what fruits you may bring out of them. We wait before you, Lord, asking that our hands and gifts, offered in service will make a difference to the world beyond all our imaginings.



The disciples were fishing in the usual way expecting the usual results, yet caught nothing. We easily relate to such efforts. Yet in listening to you the disciples cast their nets in a different way and caught a great catch. Help us to learn from them and to listen to your guidance that we may be the effective fishers of men and women you call us to be.

Good Shepherd, teach us to:

follow you
care for all that are close to us,
protect those who are threatened,
welcome those who are rejected,
forgive those who are burdened by guilt,
heal those who are broken and sick,
share with those who have little or nothing,
take the time to really know one another
and love as you have loved us.

Good Shepherd, teach us to:
 spread compassion to those who are far away,
 speak for those who are voiceless,
 defend those who are oppressed and abused,
 work for justice for those who are exploited,
 to make peace for those who suffer violence,
 take the time to recognise our connectedness,
 and love as you have loved us.

Good Shepherd, teach us to:
 follow you,
 and to be faithful to the calling you gave us to be shepherds in your name. Amen.

(Adapted from Christian Aid &, John van de Laar, © 2009 Sacredise;)



Prayers of the People for the People

You will find these prayers below. The central column is a prayer. Either side are some prompts for your thoughts, reflections and further prayer.

Pray for:		Pray for:
<p><i>Ask God's guidance for The Minister and Elders</i></p> <p><i>Pray for the members of our congregation</i></p>	<p>Risen Christ, you are the Great Shepherd of the sheep. We pray that your church will follow you, responding to your call. We pray for sheep who are lost. May they hear the joyful bleating of your flock praising you and return to the fold.</p>	<p><i>Thank God for the witness of the church in the past</i></p> <p><i>Pray for the mission and ministry of the church in our community.</i></p>
<p><i>Pray for the elimination of all those factors that force people into foodbanks</i></p> <p><i>Thank God for people working to relieve poverty.</i></p>	<p>Lord Jesus, we thank you for your loving care for your sheep. We thank you for all that sustains life; for food, shelter, medical care. We ask that you will be with those who are lonely or sad, hungry or homeless; may they experience your love and find new pastures that will sustain them.</p>	<p><i>Pray for people who sleep rough, our in temporary accommodation; refugees living in camps; children with no stability in their lives</i></p>
<p><i>Ask God to give Nicola Sturgeon, Boris Johnson, & the UK and Scottish governments insight, wisdom, compassion, honesty & integrity.</i></p>	<p>Lord Jesus, we pray for the leaders of nations. May they care for all and lead them in peace to good things, recognising that there are sheep in other pens but that all God's people belong to one flock and have one shepherd.</p>	<p><i>Pray that we will all recognise our interconnectedness. That leaders will work for the common good That we will sacrifice self for the benefit of others</i></p>

<i>Give thanks for all who are standing alongside the poorest in the world, working to bring life and hope.</i>		
<i>Bring to God the needs of people sad, lone, abused, neglected, or exploited.</i>	Lord Jesus grant courage and resilience to all who are anxious or troubled, burdened by the demands of the world and the responsibilities they hold.	<i>Pray for headteachers and all working with children.</i>
<i>Thank God: that Jesus conquered death. for his promise of life beyond death through faith in his Son</i>	Lord Jesus, we pray for those who have recently lost loved ones. May their tears of sadness become tears of joy in the knowledge that because you lay down your life for your sheep, through faith in you, they will have everlasting life at one with God our Father. Amen.	<i>Ask God's blessing on our Funeral Directors as this very challenging time for them.</i>

Benediction and Blessing: Hebrews 13:20-21

“Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

[Blessing click on the link](#)

One of the consequences of us not being able to worship together is that the church anticipates a fall in income. However, we continue to incur costs, of insurance etc. There will be little financial saving to our not meeting, yet revenues could be severely hit. Please prayerfully reflect on this and, if you are able, continue to put aside your financial offering so that you can make your contribution for the work of the church when we next meet together. Thank you.

Thank you too if you already give by standing order or by bank transfer, that is much appreciated.