

Lectionary readings: Acts 4: 5-12; Psalm 23; 1 John 3: 16-24; John 10: 11-18

For reflection and prayer

- **Acts 4:** Here is a very different Peter from the one who denied Jesus. Here is Peter filled with the Holy Spirit, bold, confident, God strengthening him. Here is one who has allowed the risen Christ to transform him and enable him to start afresh. Here is someone who himself has been healed and forgiven, through whom the presence of God brings healing to a sick man. Are we opening ourselves to the healing, transforming power of Christ? Are we allowing the powerful presence of God to be seen in our lives?
- **Psalm 23:** Here is a Japanese version of Psalm 23 which has something to say to us today as we begin to ease out of lockdown. *'The Lord is my pace-setter. I shall not rush. He makes me stop for quiet intervals. He provides me with images of stillness which restore my serenity. He leads me in the way of efficiency through calmness of mind and his guidance is peace. Even though I have a great many things to accomplish each day, I will not fret, for his presence is here. His timelessness, his all importance will keep me in balance. He prepares refreshment and renewal in the midst of my activity by anointing my mind with oils of tranquillity. My cup of joyous energy overflows. True harmony and effectiveness shall be the fruits of my hours for I shall walk in the pace of my Lord and dwell in his house for ever.'* Why not read it in as many

versions as you can and let God speak to you afresh through its timeless words?

- **1 John 3:** *'Let's not just talk about love; let's practise real love.'* (v18 The Message) Real love is choosing to live a selfless, sacrificial life, like Jesus. Only as we live in close communion with God, opening ourselves up to Him and allowing His love to fill us, so that we live, not out of our own ego, but in response to the Spirit of God within us, only then can we give ourselves to others in the way that God has given Himself to us - extravagantly, sacrificially, selflessly. How can we grow in our love for God so that we are living like Jesus?
- **John 10:** Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He knows each one of us intimately, and he wants us to feel so at home with him and trust him that we draw close to him and allow him to lead us step by step through life. Jesus' love is all-inclusive: He wants only one flock, every one of us knowing that we belong to him, that we're precious to him, his love for us knowing no bounds. He wants us to become shepherds to those around us, gently and lovingly reaching out to them, encouraging, affirming, accepting, loving like him, our love, like his, knowing no bounds.

A prayer

Please God, I want to love with the spontaneity of the small child, alive with delight in love's perennial newness. I want to love without discrimination, hugging everything you have created, including myself. I want to love recklessly. I want to love with trust. Jesus, you stretched your arms and embraced the world and died for it. Show me how to live and love like you. (Adapted from 'Teach Me to Love' by Joy Cowley)