

## Good Shepherd

26 4 15

Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:  
raise us, who trust in him,  
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,  
that we may seek those things which are above,  
where he reigns with you.

Our text may be found at the beginning of today's gospel from John 10 (v11):

**'I am the good shepherd.'**

How many of the 'I am' sayings of Jesus found in John's gospel can you name ?

- **I am the bread of life** 6 v35
- **I am the light of the world** 8 v12
- **I am the door** 10 v9
- **I am the good shepherd** 10 v11
- **I am the resurrection and the life** 11 v25
- **I am the way the truth and the life** 14 v6
- **I am the true vine** 15 v1

By focussing on the 'I am' sayings of Jesus, John is telling us that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, for one of the names of God that we learn from Exodus 3 v15 when Moses has a God-encounter in front of the burning bush is **'I AM WHO I AM'**.

Here, at St Bart's, we are fortunate to have some beautiful, stained glass. Behind the font are two that depict Jesus as the light of the world and as the good shepherd. The image of Jesus cradling the lost sheep in his arms and carrying him back home to the flock embodies the loving care and concern found in 'The Parable of the Lost Sheep' (Luke 15 v3 - 7).

Psalm 23, a favourite choice at funerals and weddings, depicts the Lord as my shepherd. He is with us caring for us by the way he leads us to food and drink and shelter – and he is even with us in 'the valley of the shadow of death'.

And, in today's gospel passage, Jesus is declaring that he is the good shepherd. King David was a shepherd boy before he became king. Shepherds tending their flock on the hillside outside Bethlehem were privileged to hear the message of an angel, that the Messiah had been born in a stable of an inn in the town below. And here, Jesus sets out the criterion for being a good shepherd: a willingness to lay down his life for the sheep. Extraordinary ! Why ? Because the good shepherd is not a hired hand – he owns the sheep; they are his; he knows them personally and is known to them, by them. But there is a surprise: the declaration that there are other sheep not of this fold that he will gather in. It is not just the Children of Israel who are God's chosen people but us, too, Gentiles, non-Jews, we are also the sheep of his pasture.

This is the season of Eastertide and we do have the message of the death and resurrection of Christ before us. And this is precisely what the climax of this passage on the good shepherd is all about: in verse 17 and 18 we read: '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.’ Beforehand, Jesus knew what was to happen and Jesus, the good shepherd, was prepared to pay the price for his sheep.

Easter occurs at the same time of Passover and the image of the angel of death passing over the dwellings of the Children of Israel in slavery in Egypt is central to the story. Their door posts were marked by the blood of a lamb. Jesus is not only the good shepherd but he is also the lamb who was sacrificed for us so that we, his flock, might be set free from the slavery of sin.

So, today, as we remember the image of Jesus the good shepherd, let’s give thanks that he is there for us and cares enough for us to die for us: – and that on the third day he rose again that we might live.

I have spoken in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew’s, Dinard*

*26<sup>th</sup> April, 2015*

G: Sermons 31 : Good Shepherd

