



## Praying the Scripture - a few simple steps at home

### Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020

1. Start with stillness and quietening down; then gently read the passage, noticing any feelings and connections to your own experience.
2. Read the passage again and spend understand. *The notes in your Bible may be of help at this point.*
3. Read the passage a third time - wondering how you yourself might pray the text over the next few days.
4. Over the next week, set aside times to come back more than once to the passage. You could read it all or part of it again, slowly. Perhaps there is a special word for you in this passage of Scripture? Keep this word or phrase in your thoughts and gently repeat it, bringing it to mind and allowing God to speak to you in your heart.
5. Finally, come back to the text to conclude: What is God in this scripture asking of you this week? What is the one challenge, one little change you are asked to make or the thing you have been asked to do? Then say a prayer of thanksgiving for the good news in the passage. End in quiet prayer.



### **THIS SUNDAY'S GOSPEL – John 10: 1-10 “The Good Shepherd”**

‘Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.’ Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

### **A Short Thought**

Jesus knows each of us by name, and calls us into abundant life, leading us to safe pasture and sweet water. The metaphor of sheep can seem an unflattering one. But if we look closely at what Jesus is saying, we see that his riddles aren’t really about sheep. Jesus is talking about recognizing the shepherd.

Remember that he just gave sight to a man who had never seen, and yet that man recognized him as God’s Messiah while the Pharisees, who should have recognized the One they’d been waiting for, were blind to God’s power working among them. Now, Jesus explains his miracle by comparing these respected religious leaders to thieves and bandits who only want to steal and destroy. By refusing to accept Jesus as God’s own Son, the Messiah for whom they claim to hope, the Pharisees threaten God’s people, stealing their hope, destroying their trust in God alone, who is the Good Shepherd.

We cannot completely experience that abundant life until we share it. As sheep who know our shepherd’s voice, we also lead other sheep through the gate that stands open before us. By joining in Christ’s mission to bring abundant life to all of God’s children, we experience that life even more fully. This means engaging with those around us. Abundant life isn’t the goal. It is the result of following Jesus, who made the blind to see, the lame to walk, who fed the hungry and comforted those in sorrow, who offered his own life and then conquered death once and for all.

Here is the gate. Will you go in? Christ is the gate. Will you show him to someone else? He came to give life in abundance. It’s more than you or I can keep to ourselves. Christ is calling you by name, to enter the gate, and to lead another sheep into a life of abundance

## SOME POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Here Jesus reveals to us why he came. He came that we might have abundant life. I think about this and what it might mean for me. What is life-giving for me? Whatever it is, that is where I will find God.
2. "Care" seems the fundamental image here. It invites a reflection on our own experience of being cared for, in all sorts of ways. It opens us to the experience of being cared for by God in Jesus. Can you write your own prayer of being loved? Where do you experience God loving you?
3. Jesus uses rich images from daily life to illustrate the depth of his desired relationship with us. On the one side, Jesus speaks of shepherd and sheep, gatekeeper and gate, pasture and life, recognition and salvation. The contrasting words are: strangers, thieves and bandits, killing and stealing, running away in fear instead of following, climbing in rather than walking through the open gate? What images would you use for your relationship with God?
4. In looking for meaning, when did I realise the Gospel is really not a teaching but a person? Offer a prayer of relationship.

### Prayer -

O God, you never cease to call even those far away, for it is your will that all be drawn into one fold. Attune our ears to the voice of the Good Shepherd, who leads us always to you, that we may find under your tender protection life in all its fullness. We ask this through Jesus, who died and rose for love of us and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. **Amen**

#### Prayer in these uncertain times

*We pray for all those in our country and throughout the world suffering from the Corona Virus. May its victims and their families be strengthened by the support of our community of faith and restored soon to full health. We also pray for our leaders and medical personnel who deal with the virus. May we keep calm and may we join together in solidarity with care and compassion to tackle this emergency. This we ask in confidence through Christ Our Lord. Amen*

