

25th April 2021

The Lord is my good shepherd –
and yours.

The Shepherd knows you –and
he knows me.

Come and walk with him beside
still waters.

Come and have your soul
restored. **Amen**

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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.*

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[The Lord's my Shepherd Stuart Townend with lyrics - YouTube](#)

Lord, a year ago your house was not a fold in which we could meet.
Confined to our homes, we prayed as a silent wolf prowled the world,
a pandemic that threatened us all.

We thank you for watching over us, and for those of us who were safely delivered.
It was a testing time, Lord, but yet there was community.

We thank you for the proof that your Church has no walls,
as we learned to reach out to one another and still to worship – but in different ways.
We thank you for those in our communities who had been taken for granted,
overlooked, not considered of great importance,
but on whom we came to rely to save lives.

We thank you that our values were tested, and that we saw what really matters.
Good Shepherd, who knows suffering and sacrifice beyond our imagining,
we thank you that we are here today, enfolded in your love. **Amen.**

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John 10:11-18

Oh no, not sheep again! I fear that sometimes we are in danger of sentimentalising sheep and shepherds. It's a dirty, smelly, bloody, risky and being a sheep isn't all it's cracked up to be, especially when there is mint sauce around.



What did he know of sheep – this man who described himself as the good shepherd? Even the great King David had once

been a shepherd so he knew what the job was all about. Jesus hadn't. Yet he called himself a shepherd and a good one at that but his cousin John called him 'the lamb of God'. So, was he a sheep or a shepherd or neither?

What did he know of priesthood – this upstart teenager debating with the learned priests in the temple as if he knew more about God, more theology than they? They knew what the role was all about, all the correct rites and rituals and every minute detail of the law of Moses. Was he called to be the priest who carried out the sacrifices – or maybe a sacrifice himself?

What did he know of carpentry – this boy who grew up in a carpenter's shop, surrounded by wood and nails and lathes? Not as much as he ought, perhaps, as one who would be expected to contribute to the family business and, indeed, the family income. Was he going to be expert at hammering nails into wood, or would others hammer nails into him?

What did he know of fishing – this man who called real fisherman and promised that they would soon be fishing for people? They knew what the job was all about and that sometimes they caught loads and often they caught nothing. But he, with no experience at all, had the boldness (or was it cheek?) to teach them their own trade. Was he a fisherman? Were they fished by him?

What did he know of teaching this – this man whom a prostitute called teacher? You don't have such women among your class and, even if you did, what could he teach her about how to carry out her profession? Was he a teacher with anything good to impart and who were his students?

What did he know about healthcare – this man who often didn't think to question the patient, ask about their symptoms or examine them and sometimes even claimed to make them better without ever even meeting them? What did he know about medicines and their power to kill or cure? Was he a healer or was he sick himself and in need of healing?

What did he know about catering – this man who looked at a group of well over 500 people? The menu was ok – bread and fish – but the quantity of the ingredients – just

the 5 loaves and the 2 fish? Was he a chef or might he be in some way the one whose very presence feeds others – the bread of life, the living water, body, blood?

What did he know about serving, this free man who lived with his mum and his sisters until he was grown up and later never had a home but stayed and ate in other people's homes? What did he know about doing the bidding of others, fetching and carrying, doing all the demeaning and menial tasks, never questioning or commenting and always seemingly invisible to those who were being served? Was he one to be served or one to serve?

What did he know about kingship – this man whose mother entertained royal visitors just after he was born - in a barn? What did he know about ruling the world, or even a small part of it – of armies and strategies and negotiations. What throne did he ever occupy; what kingly robe or crown did he wear? How could he be the king of kings or even the king of the Jews as written on what amounted to his epitaph? And yet – he was all of those and so much more and he calls us by name, to follow that same ministry and mission in our place and time.

Some people are described as having a vocation i.e. a calling. It tends to be people who have become monks, nuns or priests, people who have devoted their whole lives to what people see as serving God. Occasionally we extend that to people in the caring professions – perhaps – to doctors and teachers. And there we have a problem. I don't doubt that God calls people to all of those things but the calling to the mission and ministry of Jesus isn't restricted to certain roles or jobs. It isn't necessarily about employment at all.

We are called to lead, but maybe not to be a councillor or a Politician. We are called to heal, but maybe not to be a home care assistant. or a pharmacist or a brain surgeon. We are called to teach, but maybe not to be a classroom assistant or a professor. We are called to feed others, but maybe not to be a dinner lady or a farmer. We are called to be creative – with our hands, our brain, our voice our imagination. We are called to follow every and any trade, profession, job or maybe none and, to coin a phrase, it's not what you do but the way that you do it – or perhaps, it's not only what you do but who you are and how you are as and where God has placed you.

Every single one of us has a vocation. God is calling us to be true to him and, in doing so, to be true to ourselves and to others.

That picture of Jesus could perhaps have been made of tiny images of all of the things he was – shepherd, priest, carpenter, fisherman, teacher, healer, servant, king – the list goes on and on – but it is in fact made up of tiny images of people like you and me – men and women,



boys and girls, of all ages, nationalities, abilities, disabilities, faults, failings, hopes, fears, gifts, skills.

We are the body of Christ here and now. So how can you be part of that body? How can you be Christlike? What is God calling you to do? How is God calling you to do what you already do? Who is God calling you to be? How is God calling you to be?

King of kings, majesty,
God of heaven living in me.
Gentle Saviour, closest Friend,
Strong Deliverer, Beginning and End,
all within me falls at your throne.

Earth and heaven worship you,
Love eternal, faithful and true,
who bought the nations, ransomed souls,
brought this sinner near to your throne ;
all within me cries out in praise.

*Your majesty, I can but bow ;
I lay my all before you now.
In royal robes I don't deserve,
I live to serve your majesty.*

Jarrod Cooper: © 1996 Sovereign Lifestyle
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[King of Kings, Majesty \(Lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

We pray for the lost sheep of this world:
for politicians striving to hang onto power and influence,
for leaders of the nations who have forgotten to serve the common good.

We pray for the lost sheep of this world:
for those who follow the fashions and frivolities of today at the expense of tomorrow,
for those who get swept along by the crowd on tides of prejudice and easy judgements.

We pray for the lost sheep of this world:
for those who wander off on their own, to escape from reality,
for those who are led astray, away from safety and well-being.

We pray for the lost sheep of this world:
for those who take what they have for granted,
for those who are unable to give thanks for the things they have. **Amen.**

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Lord, when we feel lost and confused, help us to follow the 'good shepherd'.
When we are tired by caring for others, help us to follow the 'good shepherd'.
When we're tempted by the wolves, help us to follow the 'good shepherd'.
When we're enjoying good pasture and rest, help us to follow the 'good shepherd'.
Send us out to be faithful sheep and help us to follow the 'good shepherd'. **Amen.**



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