

## All age talk for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Easter – 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020

The Good Shepherd – John 10:1-10

Prayer

Today the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month would have been an All Age Service, but we are not in normal times, we are locked out of our churches and staying at home for our safety due to corona virus. Here we are today, am speaking to you from my home and I hope young people are together with their family as they join me in today's service.

I have a question for you who owns a pet especially dog/s, when you call your dog they recognise your voice/s isn't? Yes!

If yes, can you tell me why they recognise your voice/s? Here are a few reasons why they recognise your voice/s, you feed them, cuddle/love them, wash them, take them out for walks, play with them, protect them and keep them safe. I bet there are many more reasons you could add to the list. And because of these reasons, your pet dog recognises your voice and will come to you when you call isn't?

In today's gospel Jesus tells his followers of the shepherd who protects his sheep from thieves and bandits by keeping watch over them and staying at the gate and only those he lets in enters the sheep's pen, the sheep follow his voice when calls and leads them out. For most of us who live in cities we have little contact with sheep and shepherds except that we know shepherds look after sheep and in crib services at Christmas, when children are dressed up as sheep and shepherds in the re-telling of the story of the birth of Jesus, they were the first the angels told of Jesus' birth. After seeing the Christ child, they went rejoicing and telling all those they met on the way of the Good News. In Jesus days shepherds were not popular people because their jobs meant they were away in the fields, dirty and smelly most of the time and they stayed and slept with their sheep at night to protect them against thieves, bandits and wild animals.

Jesus uses images of things his followers are familiar with to teach them about God. Here he likened his mission to that of the shepherd who protects and care for his sheep. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who together with God leads us to what we need, food, water, air, true security, rest and real love. When we trust Him we are free to enjoy all the good gifts fully as God gives them and the richness of God's blessings. When Jesus is our shepherd, we experience abundant life that no thief can take away. When he is the shepherd, we will not be led astray as we will recognise his voice when he calls (just as pet dog/s recognises the voice of their owners). As the shepherd guards the gate preventing thieves and bandits from coming in to harm his sheep, so also when we allow Jesus the Good Shepherd into our lives, he is the gate, there's no need for us to try to do that job for him and our anxieties about whether the wrong kind of people are getting in are replaced with freedom to love whomever we find ourselves among the flock.

Jesus is our Lord and shepherd, therefore we need not fear no evil or sickness, surely as we follow him, goodness and mercy shall follow us. Amen.