

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home
Sunday 2nd May 2021

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

‘All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him’.

(Psalm 22 verse 27) We remember today the goodness of God our Good Shepherd. We turn to him with our worship and thanksgiving. Today we once more welcome our friend from Clare Baptist Church Vivien Sargeant who brings us God’s word. Vivien will ask us “Do you know your Master’s Voice”?

Hymn/Song

Prayer

Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders
unmistakable and clear;
mighty signs to prove your presence,
overcoming doubt and fear.
Lord, you sometimes speak in whispers,
still and small and scarcely heard;
only those who want to listen
catch the all-important word.
Lord, you sometimes speak in silence,
through our loud and noisy day:
we can know and trust you better
when we quietly wait and pray.
Lord, you love to speak in Scripture:
words that summon from the page,
shown and taught us by your Spirit
with fresh light for every age.
Lord, you always speak in Jesus,
always new yet still the same;
teach us now more of our Saviour;
make our lives display his Name. **Amen.**
(Words by Christopher Idle STF 158)

Bible Reading

John chapter 10 verses 1- 21

Prayer of Confession

Lord, we would follow you wherever you might lead.
Forgive us when we stumble and when we stray.
Forgive us when, distracted we lose our way.
Forgive us when we do not listen for your voice.
Lord, have mercy upon us. Forgive us in the name of Jesus.
Be the one to whom we turn, whose hand we hold,
the Shepherd who leads us safely to the fold. **Amen.**

Hymn/Song

Sermon by Vivien Sergeant



I noticed when I was last with you on Zoom that many of you, like me are dog owners. So I thought I would share this picture of my dog, Max. I say my dog because he is **my** dog. He will go for walks with John but if I am around sometimes he will spread his paws out and stand firm and if John tries to pull him he will lay down absolutely refusing to move because although he knows John walks and feeds him and fusses him given the choice he would rather stay with me. Why? I'm not a dog psychologist but I think some of it is because he doesn't want to miss what I have to say to him. I am not saying this to fit in with the reading, but because it is true. He responds to my voice, whatever he is doing if I call he will obey. The different sounds of my voice instruct him to wait, to come, to heal and so on. He knows my different actions and what they mean. If Max is struck with something, like he can't get his ball he looks at me expecting me to sort it out for him. He is a very loyal and faithful dog.

Jesus in John chapter 10 gives us an example of what it means for sheep to have a good shepherd. It follows and links into in Ch9, where a man who was blind from birth was healed by Jesus and the Pharisees were questioning him, refusing to believe that anyone, especially Jesus could do this. The same people who referred to in ch9 were still here in ch10 listening to what Jesus had to say. And so he tries to explain in everyday language who He is by liking himself to the good shepherd. The verses we are looking at give three pictures of the love of God for man, one as a shepherd, one as the door of the sheep's pen and lastly as the shepherd who is prepared to risk his own life to save his sheep. Although we are going to touch on the pictures at different degrees, we are mainly going to think about the Voice of Jesus.

The Masters Voice

V2 and v3 tells us that the watchman, the man who looks after not only his own sheep but, at times, many other flocks recognises the shepherd for the different flocks. He will only let those shepherds into the pen. When the shepherd speaks the sheep that belong to him will respond and follow. They will go out by way of the door, not over the wall but through the door. The shepherd will take the lead, the sheep follow. The sheep do not follow another shepherd or anyone else because they don't know his voice and as such do not trust him. V16 says It doesn't matter where the sheep are, some may not be in the sheep pen but they will join and all the sheep from wherever they come will become one flock, with the same shepherd. Jesus is clearly saying my sheep(my people) know my voice, they will listen and wait for it to speak. Have you heard the voice of God, do you still know that voice? Do you listen for it? Do you wait for it?

I found this poem some time ago and have used it in previous talks. I don't know the author, but they have tried to understand what it must be like for God when we are talking to him. Sheep can be very noisy, calling to each other, warning each other, caring for each other. But in this picture they know immediately when the Shepherd speak. Just like my dog Max and your dog. They know their Master's voice, they know what you are wanting them to do, it's just at times they choose not to listen.

*When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving me advice,
you have not done what I asked.*

*When I ask you to listen to me
and you begin to tell me why
I shouldn't feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.*

*When I ask you to listen to me
and you feel you have to do something
to solve my problem,
you have failed me,
strange as that may seem.*

*Listen! All I ask is that you listen.
Don't talk or do – just hear me.*

*So please listen, and just hear me.
And if you want to talk, wait a minute
for your turn – and I will listen to you*

How well do you listen for the Master's voice and respond to it?
Are you always willing to follow it or do other things get in the way?

Little Red Riding Hood

Everyone knows the story of Little Red Riding Hood, how the wolf dressed up as Grandma to deceive Red Riding Hood.

The wolf disguised himself because he wanted to trick the girl.

There are many temptations, obstacles, huddles that we have in our lives that try to entice us away from the life Jesus has planned for us. In the second picture v 7 – 10 it is very clear that the Shepherd always leads them out through the door, no other way, no short cut. Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. His way is about justice, righteousness, to give life not to take it away.

If those sheep in the pen do not follow immediately, though the door they will get left behind and perhaps miss out on the lush green grass that the shepherd wants to take them to. If they don't follow the voice, they will leave themselves open to danger, to be taken by

those who will not care for them, love them, save them as the good shepherd does.

God's voice will never deny Jesus Christ. It will never say someone can't be saved. God's voice will never tell you to hate someone (their sin yes, but not them). God's voice will never tell you to doubt His will, His Word, or His way. His voice will never tell you that He doesn't love you. God's voice will never instruct you to sin.

I don't know what God's voice has said to you in the past, today or will say in the future. But I do know that it is confirmed in the Bible, it will bring about justice and righteousness and show you more and more of His love, gifts and blessings that he has for each one of you.

Sheep are usually kept in a flock.

V 14 – 18. The third example talks about the shepherd laying down his life, only to take it up again. It is easy for us to understand and see what Jesus is saying, that we are his sheep because we have responded to his voice, he called and we followed. Knowing and accepting that he did give his life for us so that we would be saved, but rejoicing in the knowledge that he rose again so we may know eternity. We do not have to do this alone. We are part of the universal flock, but also of individual fellowships. If we sometimes are not quite sure, wonder if we haven't heard correctly or worry because we haven't heard at all then look at what the other sheep in your flock are doing. Talk with them in your own "special Baa" language. Share together, rejoice together, walk together, work together. You are not meant to be alone; you are not meant to work it out all by yourself. Yes, you have a good shepherd that you need to listen and follow, but make sure that you go with the flock. If not, you might find that you are struggling or have taken a wrong turning, you are lost.

Listen today to the voice of your shepherd. Go to those around you to help you hear correctly and understand for your shepherd will speak to you. The good shepherd never leaves His sheep; he lays down His life for them so that they may know life. God bless you as you seek to hear what He has to say to you. Amen.

Hymn/Song

Prayers of Intercession

O Lord, our Shepherding God, come close to us now.

Come near us in our time of need.

Shepherding God, we need you in our time of anxiety.

We need you in our time of economic uncertainty.

We need you in a time of a global pandemic.

We remember before you all victims of Covid 19 and their families.

We need you to bind our wounds, and pour your healing ointment on our heads. We need the briars, and brambles, and burrs pulled out of our fleece and skin.

Shepherding God, you guide us with your voice,

Help us to listen and follow you no matter where your voice leads.

Help us to trust you.

Shepherding God, protect us from the hired hands that do not really care for us and have neglected or abused us in the past.

Shepherding God, thank you for your Son Jesus who laid down his life for those who follow him and for those who are not in the fold yet.

Lord we pray for those who don't know the Shepherd, whose life circumstances have kept them from knowing the Good Shepherd.

We pray that by our actions, our behaviour and our reaching out into the community they may come to know you.

Shepherding God, renew us, guide us with your love and renew us with your peace.

Shepherd of all, by laying down your life for your flock you reveal your love for all. Lead us from the place of death to the place of abundant life, that guided by your care for us, we may rightly offer our lives in love for you and our neighbours.

We ask these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray

The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/Song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.

Day by day, God leads us:

to the deep, deep pools of peace,
to the green, lush lawns of grace.

Day by day, Jesus calls us:

to pour out ourselves in loving service,

Day by day, the Holy Spirit shows us:

the community we could be,
the family we are called to become.

May God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit guard you from every danger, guide you in the right way and bless you all your days. **Amen.**

Coffee Time Conversation

- In John 10 what does Jesus say he will do for his sheep?
- How do recognize the voice of Jesus from other voices?
- How will you be the voice of the Good Shepherd this week?

Suggested Hymns and Songs

More Traditional Music:

I heard the voice of Jesus say
The king of love my Shepherd is
I will sing the wondrous story

More Contemporary Music:

I will set my face to seek the Lord
The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want
O let the son of God enfold you.

Keep social distancing.

Keep safe.

Keep communicating.

Keep celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord.

God bless you and keep you until we meet again.

My prayers are with you.

With love, Peter