



COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION
SUNDAY 26 APRIL 2026 – Fourth Sunday of Easter

COLLECT

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
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Psalm 23.

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd; ♦
therefore can I lack nothing.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures ♦
and leads me beside still waters.
- 3 He shall refresh my soul ♦
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- 4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; ♦
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You spread a table before me
in the presence of those who trouble me; ♦
you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
- 6 Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, ♦
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

A reading from the first epistle of Peter, chapter 2, verses 19-25.

For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

'He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth.'

When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

At Morning Prayer, the Gospel is simply the second reading, people sit to hear it and is introduced in the same way as the first:

The second reading is John, chapter 10, verses 1-10.

and then at the end:

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

For Eucharists/ Communion people stand to hear the Gospel. Everywhere except Fitz introduces it with an Acclamation (the blue bit), and then we all use the introduction and ending (the green bit):

Alleluia. **Alleluia.**

This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

Alleluia.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 10, verses 1-10.

Glory to you, O Lord

And then at the end:

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

'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 Reflection from Peter

I write this looking out of the window of my room at Nunraw Abbey where I am doing singing practice with the monks – amongst other things! Looking across to the green hills I see flocks of sheep, and lots of lambs. This morning there was one lamb who, very boldly, had gone off on its own. Leaving the flock, this lamb was almost in another field altogether and was playing very happily alone. It was a morning for jumping practice – each jump a bit higher than the one before – until suddenly a tractor appeared and startled the lamb who ran to find mum, but set off at first in the wrong direction and had to do a great circle round the field before heading off in the right way!

Today has been known for years as “Good Shepherd Sunday” – for obvious reasons. And immediately we find ourselves facing a contradiction. That sense of having someone looking out for us, somewhere who is there when things go wrong – that is hugely powerful. On the other hand, we spend all our formative years learning independence, learning how to manage on our own. We come increasingly to resist being guided and led. All this is very proper and normal. But the longing to have someone just ‘there’ in times of need never goes away either. For all of us, the death of those who raised us is a huge moment of change and readjustment, no matter how much or how little we had struggled to be free of their influence and guidance.

Hearing this part of St John’s Gospel today can be read as underlining the fact that we are never properly grown-up, never really safe left to our own devices, that we always need someone in a parent role to keep an eye on us. Sometimes, indeed, Jesus is presented as the perfect parent and the perfect friend, but he is not really either. The Gospel says, “I am the good shepherd.” Jesus is not a sheep. He is a different kind of being. And so he is for us. God is our good shepherd, better than the perfect parent or the perfect friend. God does not suffer from the limitations of human beings. God ‘knows the secrets of our hearts’ and loves us with a perfect love. God never interferes or tries to prevent us making mistakes in a human kind of way. The reading underlines this kind of hands-off approach. Jesus today doesn’t even speak of being the shepherd, but of being the gate for the sheep; not something personal, but something mechanical, practical and necessary. What is absolutely certain is that God is to be trusted. Even the best gates have to be maintained and repaired. God is always reliable, always present, always there for every particle of creation – even the bits that we are inclined to reject.