

My God, my God, why hast thou me  
forsaken? why so far  
art thou from helping me, and from  
my words that roaring are?

Like water I'm poured out, my bones  
all out of joint do part;  
Amidst my bowels, as the wax,  
so melted is my heart.

We sing some of the Scottish metrical psalms, such as *The Lord's my shepherd* and *All people that on earth do dwell*.

At least three living hymn writers, all members of the HSGBI, have attempted more modern metrical psalters - Dr. Carl P. Daw Jun. from the USA (who has only got to Ps. 50 so far), Dr. Graham Deans from Aberdeen and Dr. Adam Carlill from Reading. They all, like Mr. Rous, claim to be sticking as closely as possible to the original Hebrew. A group of S. Wilts Christians sang Adam's version of Psalm 23 last year and voted it the best of 14 new hymns they were trying out. He wrote it to go with Orlando Gibbons' beautiful little tune, *Song 46 (Drop, drop, slow tears)*.

God is my shepherd; nothing shall I need,  
In grassy fields he lays me down to feed.

By restful waters he directs my soul,  
and gently brings me back to make me whole.

In righteous path he guides my erring feet,  
that I may know his name, for it is sweet.

Yes, though I walk alone in death's dark vale,  
I will not fear when evil shall assail.

For you are with me, ever by my side,  
your rod and staff to comfort and to guide.

You have arranged a table in my sight,  
as witness to my foes of your delight.

Pouring the purest oil upon my head,  
you fill my cup, and I am richly fed.

Surely your grace and mercy will pursue;  
they daily follow me, my whole life through

So I will dwell within the holy gate,  
for length of days, O Lord, to watch and wait.

## Jesus the Good Shepherd

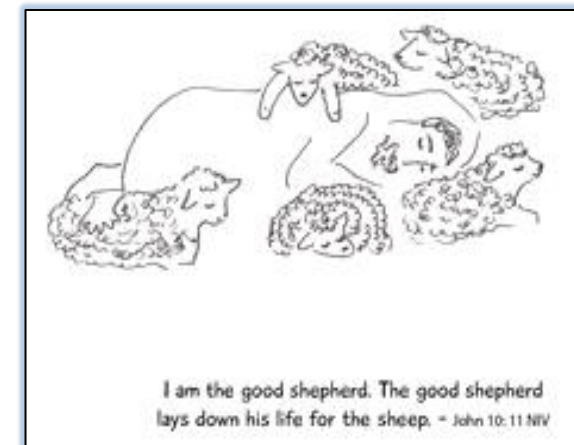
Genesis 7 Acts 2 v 42-47 John 10 v 1-10

### I am the Door of the Sheepfold

by Malcolm Guite

Not one that's gently hinged or deftly hung,  
Not like the ones you planed at Joseph's place,  
Not like the well-oiled openings that swung  
So easily for Pilate's practiced pace,  
Not like the ones that closed in Mary's face  
From house to house in brimming Bethlehem,  
Not like the one that no man may assail,  
The dreadful curtain, The forbidding veil  
That waits your breaking in Jerusalem.

Not one you made but one you have become:  
Load-bearing, balancing, a weighted beam  
To bridge the gap, to bring us within reach  
Of your high pasture. Calling us by name,  
You lay your body down across the breach,  
Yourself the door that opens into home.



Reflection on the readings by Revd Becky:

I was most annoyed this week when I walked to Wilton to take a short video of Father Mark's Herdwick sheep, which live behind Wilton Parish Church. I found that they had gone through the gate into the field behind. They were no-where to be seen! All my efforts were in vain... but the exercise was nourishing?!

We tend to think of this Sunday as Good Shepherd Sunday and yet John's Jesus describes himself as both the Shepherd *and* the gate/door. The function of the gate/door is to keep the sheep safe at night and some commentaries suggest that the Shepherd himself was the gate, laying down across it at night for the sheep's protection. The gate is opened during the day so that they can follow the shepherd and find nourishing pastures.

Jesus is symbolically the protector of his sheep and provider of their nourishment; life in abundance.

If we take into consideration the chapter which leads into today's Gospel, Jesus appears to be commenting on the Pharisees. They are shepherds of God's people but have interrogated the blind man whom Jesus has just healed. They are more concerned about their own power and authority than including others in the sheepfold to nourish and protect.

The blind man's physical sight and spiritual insight have been awakened in his own acknowledgement of Jesus and he becomes part of Jesus' community. 'He followed the voice of Jesus before he ever saw him and it led to new life. His days of isolation are over, he knows he is a valued member of Jesus flock, cared for.'

Jesus emphasizes that sheep know the voice of their shepherd. This was true for the blind man and is true today. God speaks to us, and invites us into the church community who care. What is important about the community is that they listen to God's voice and include and care for all.

Acts chapter 2 provides us with the vision that St. Luke has for the church- a place where the ethos is 'unity, commitment and commonality'. (Margaret Aymer)

The early church community persists despite its struggles: people break bread; have reverence for God's signs; sell, share and redistribute goods to all those in need; pray and praise. It is a fold that enfolds - spirituality is worked out practically in radical loving action. (Some scholars suggest that Luke's understanding of church reflects the radical economic teaching of John the Baptist.)

We know that this ideal of church is challenged as it evolves because people are people, there are factions, people withhold money and refuse to share, leaders fall out.. and the sheepfold's door by God's Spirit becomes widened to include both Jews and Gentiles and continues to grow.

Today the church strives to be a community of abundant life-to reflect Jesus the source of all life- in generosity of attitude, word and monetary giving.

For me, the church can be a people who seek the flourishing of all. Archbishop Desmond Tutu lives and states - 'In God's family there are no outsiders.' This is challenging as we all have hidden and more overt assumptions about whom we can accept- the challenge is to be open, like the gate.

Another challenge, as a member of the church, is how I can actively protect the vulnerable and radically share worldly goods. This is not an optional extra but a moral obligation.

You may like to reread the Gospel passage and note anything that resonates with you to pray through this week. How does the image of Jesus as the gate or Jesus as the Shepherd support and challenge your faith? What aspects of Luke's vision of church are easier or harder for you to live out? Ask God to give you the grace to listen and hear, and then act on what you have heard.

#### **HYMN MEDITATION FOR GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY M.G.S.**

The Scottish Psalter, presenting the psalms in metrical verses which can be sung like hymns, was completed in 1644 by one man, Francis Rous. But before it was finally approved for use in the Church, in 1650, it was amended by numerous individuals and committees. It is still treasured and widely used, even though some of the verses are not exactly great poetry, such as these from Psalm 22.