

Mears Ashby and Hardwick and Sywell with Overstone



**Prayers and Reflections
for use at home**

**Sunday 11 May 2025
Easter 4**

Welcome to this week's Prayers and Reflections. As Eastertide continues, we give thanks for Jesus being our Good Shepherd. As you read this week's Gospel reading, I pray that you will feel the love that Jesus declares for us. May you love being one of his sheep!

God bless,

Revd Katrina

Vicar

Phone No. 01604 812907

Mobile No. 07710 464675

E-mail: katrinahutchins94@yahoo.co.uk

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As you picture Jesus as your Good Shepherd, offer him your loving promise to be one of his faithful sheep.



Loving shepherd of thy sheep,
keep me, Lord, in safety keep;
nothing can thy pow'r withstand,
none can pluck me from thy hand.

Jane Elizabeth Leeson (1809-1881)

Prayers and Reflections for use at home on Easter 4 Good Shepherd

PREPARING OURSELVES

*Take a moment to be still in God's presence, and feel his love.
You may wish to light a candle as a sign of God's love - here,
in this room. You may also wish to have a bowl of water ready for the
time of letting go. When you are ready, say this opening prayer.*

Risen Lord Jesus,
as I prepare to spend this time in worship,
I invite you to come and fill this space,
and my inner stillness,
with your presence.

Amen.

LETTING GO

*If you come to this time of prayer and reflection with any regrets,
with things that you wish you had not said, done or been,
offer them to God in the silence of your heart. And, when you are ready,
reflect on the second verse of this week's hymn.*

Loving Shepherd, thou didst give
thine own life that I might live;
may I love thee day by day,
gladly thy sweet will obey.

Jane Elizabeth Leeson (1809-1881)



*If you wish, dip your finger into a bowl of water and
make the sign of the cross on your palm.*

Feel the Father's forgiveness.

Our verse points us to the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep. He has put himself - his body - between us and all that endangers our life with his Father in heaven. He is like a shepherd who stands in front of his sheep and fights off marauding wolves or thieving bandits. It is a sign of his deep love and concern for us.

Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
The hired hand is not the shepherd
and does not own the sheep.
So when he sees the wolf coming,
he abandons the sheep and runs away.
The wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.
The man runs away because he is a hired hand
and cares nothing for the sheep.'

John 10:11-13

Another image that we could use is of a parent or older sibling who, spotting the danger, pushes a child out of the way of runaway vehicle at the cost of their own life. This is how much our Lord loves us. He was willing to sacrifice his life on the cross to save us from ourselves - our sins, our faults and failures. Such love!

It speaks to me of this verse by Graham Kendrick. I invite you to say it, slowly and prayerfully, three times. Do pause in silence between each verse. Notice what word or phrase our Lord is sowing on your heart.

Such love, pure as the whitest snow;
such love weeps for the shame I know;
such love, paying the debt I owe;
O Jesus, such love.

Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)

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PRAYING TODAY'S PRAYER

(The Collect)

Today, this prayer is being said across our villages and the worldwide Church. Add your voice to the earthly cycle of prayer to our risen Lord who always listens to our prayers.

Risen Christ, faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep:
teach us to hear your voice
and to follow your command,
that all your people may be gathered into one flock,
to the glory of God the Father. **Amen.**

Our prayer for this week follows on beautifully from our reflection on Jesus as the Good Shepherd who sacrifices his life for us. For the cross is not the end but the beginning of his role as the shepherd of our lives. Our Lord's desire is to draw all of his sheep into his flock - the Church, uniting the whole of God's people as one.

I do love these words of Jesus.

Jesus said, 'I am the good shepherd;
I know my sheep and my sheep know me -
just as the Father knows me
and I know the Father -
and I lay down my life for the sheep.
I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold.
I must bring them also.
They too will listen to my voice,
and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.

John 10:14-16

It speaks to Jesus being the Good Shepherd who searches for his sheep, his lost sheep, and will not stop until he has found them. What a tireless shepherd he is! Think about the people in your life - family and friends, neighbours and carers. If they don't already know the Father or the Son, Jesus would love them to hear his voice and follow him.

Ponder this. You might like to choose one or two of your family or friends to pray for this week. Think about their daily lives and lifestyles. What is their view on life's big questions? Who made all that is? Who Jesus is? What is the meaning of life? Think about what might be stopping them from hearing our Lord's voice or feeling his presence? Pray for them.

Pray too that you will stay close to him in the coming week. May nothing stop you from trusting in your Good Shepherd or from hearing his voice.



Loving Shepherd, ever near,
teach me still thy voice to hear;
suffer not my steps to stray
from the straight and narrow way.

Jane Elizabeth Leeson (1809-1881)

LISTENING TO GOD'S WORD

Jesus our Good Shepherd

Then came the Festival of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews who were there gathered round him, saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.'

Jesus answered, 'I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.'

John 10:22-30



A light to reveal God to the nations...

This showdown takes places on the Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah, which is the festival of lights. It is a beautiful celebration of the temple's purification in 164BC after it was wrestled back from the Greeks by Judas Maccabeus. It feels a very fitting occasion for this make or break time in Jesus' ministry. For Jesus is the light who has come to purify the worship of God's people and to reveal God to the nations. Will the people listen, will they see Jesus as their Messiah?

For us, the evidence is clear to see. We have seen our Lord's good works, signs and miracles, and believe that only God's chosen one can do this. Jesus' image of himself as the Good Shepherd takes us to passages in the Hebrew Scriptures where God describes himself as the loving shepherd of his sheep. The most famous of which is Psalm 23.

The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.

Psalm 23:1-2

We have received his gift of new life - eternal life - through baptism. His Spirit is our guide in life, our still small voice, who dwells within us. We feel safe in our Lord's care no matter what dangers or challenges we face in life. For he walks with us. Do pause to renew your 'Yes!' to him.

But, for the one or two family members or friends who you are going to hold on your heart this week, does this language of faith speak to them? How can you open their eyes and their hearts to who Jesus is?



Where thou leadest may I go,
walking in thy steps below;
then, before thy Father's throne,
Jesu, claim me for thine own.

Jane Elizabeth Leeson (1809-1881)

OUR PRAYERS

Here are some Eastertide prayers. Feel free to add your own.

Risen Lord, you are my Good Shepherd, my guide in life.
Your words speak to my heart. Your teaching inspires my living.
Lord, receive my love and praise. Speak, Lord, and I will listen...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Lord, you are the world's Good Shepherd. You teach leaders
how to care for their people and for all nations. Inspire, Lord, those
leaders who do not know how to solve their nation's problems...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Risen Lord, you are a Good Shepherd to those who are lost in life,
those who are hurting. You hear our cries for help and come to us.
You carry us when we feel unable to carry on. Carry, Lord, I pray...

Risen Lord, hear my prayer.

Offer your own heartfelt prayers and praise.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF BLESSING

A closing prayer of blessing for this week.

Risen Lord, come and meet me where I am,
this Eastertide. Fill me with love and joy and peace,
so that I may offer your hope to others.
Bless me and keep my loved ones safe, I pray. **Amen.**