

Shepherds and Shawls

Gathering

A video can be found at: <https://vimeo.com/575728212/f1ee4b4ccb>

It includes the gathering, Bible readings and reflections. You might also like to follow the links below to the suggested songs.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that we live and worship on land that has been cared for since time immemorial by the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Gathering liturgy

From different lives
we come to worship.

From good weeks and bad weeks
we come to worship.

Bringing great times and painful memories
we come to worship.

Needing healing, needing peace
we come to worship.

With hope in our hearts
we come to worship.

Together:
we come to worship.



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Listen - Ascribe Greatness To Our God the Rock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02D3SMB21BI>

This Scripture in Song chorus echoes the words of Psalm 89 which is one of today's readings, you might like to read it during the day.

Ascribe greatness to our God the Rock
His work is perfect and all His ways are just.
A God of faithfulness and without injustice
Good and upright is He.

Listen - Hear Our Praises

<https://youtu.be/etEkgLbs5Ik>

A lovely Hillsong piece – Hear our praises rise to You!

2 Samuel 7: 1-14

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, ²the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.' ³Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you.'

⁴ But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: ⁵Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? ⁶I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. ⁷Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?' ⁸Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; ⁹and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. ¹⁴I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with a rod such as mortals use, with blows inflicted by human beings.

Ephesians 2:11-22

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called 'the uncircumcision' by those who are called 'the circumcision'—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹²remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. ¹⁷So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²²in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

Mark 6: 30-34, 53-56

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³²And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. ³³Now many saw them going and recognised them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. ³⁴As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat. ⁵⁴When they got out of the boat, people at once recognised him, ⁵⁵and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the market-places, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

May God bless these words.

May we hear God’s word for us this day.

Reflection

Shepherds and Shawls.

Today’s gospel reading, as is so often the case, has links back to the Old Testament, things that God has spoken of before, references to the Torah and how the children of Israel were to live their lives.

One of the problems we often encounter is that we are reading a scrap of scripture, a few verses plucked out from here and here, and it can be hard for us to keep a sense of the context; what happened before this, where does it fit, what does it relate to.

Our reading from Mark’s gospel today is like that. Let’s step back for a minute and remember what has just happened. The disciples have been sent out to share the good news, they are not forgotten or abandoned, God is close by. They return full of stories, elated at what they have seen and done – it reminds me of children coming home from school with SO many stories, so many things they have to tell you right now!

In the midst of this someone arrives with the news that John the Baptist has been killed by Herod – and not put to death, but put on show, debased, mutilated and all because of Herod’s ego, Herodias’ devious scheming and a young girl using lust and pride to get what she wants. John, of whom Jesus said, “among those born of woman there is none greater” – John, the one who Jesus went to, to be baptised, John the one who recognised Jesus and saw the Holy Spirit descend on Him and that’s without mentioning the family connection. The Jews were a people of story, John’s birth and the events around it were extraordinary. I can imagine Mary retelling the story of going to stay with Elizabeth to Jesus as he was growing up. And now he is gone, by such brutal means.

There are people pressing in on all sides, they can’t even have something to eat and Jesus calls the disciples to come away from the crowd; a moment to gather His thoughts, a chance to take in what’s happened... they leave but the crowd follows and

by the time Jesus steps off the boat and comes ashore there they are – more than before – waiting - and he looks around at the crowd; lost, confused, not knowing what to do or who to believe; Matthew says they were harassed and helpless; and all of a sudden things change. Hands reach out, smiles and looks of understanding are exchanged, gentle words of comfort are spoken, His compassion reaches out to each one.

That phrase 'like sheep without a shepherd' only appears a couple of times in the Bible; in Numbers, 2 Chronicles and then Matthew and Mark's accounts of this event. Both of the other references are speaking about the children of Israel – back in Numbers Moses is about to die and he asks God to appoint someone to look after the people otherwise they will be like sheep without a shepherd, and God appoints Joshua. Here in the New Testament we have the Good Shepherd, the one who looks after the sheep, protects them from harm, provides for their needs, leads them to safety.

What about us? What does the crowd look like that's around you? You might say, 'Hang on, half the state's in lockdown, no gathering, that's why we're not at church!' But if you stop for a moment, you may find that there is a crowd closer than you think – family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances who are feeling the pressure of what's happening around them, just as we are too. The hands reaching out might be by email and the gentle words may be spoken over the phone, but Jesus shows us the way – in the midst of our own stuff – there is an opportunity for us to be Jesus hands and feet, to stop and look with compassion and share His love.

I want to jump to the end of our reading from Mark for a moment – again Jesus is being followed by the crowd, coming from miles around, bringing their sick, laying them in the market places, if only we could reach out and touch the fringe of his cloak, and many find healing in that touch.

Back in Numbers 15:37-41 we read the history of the fringe on Jesus' cloak. God told the children of Israel to put a fringe of wool on the edge of their white shawl – this was to remind them of God's commands, that everything they did was covered by God's love and law – after all that was the reason FOR the law. It was a reminder that they were God's own people – it wasn't just the Levites or priests, ALL of them were to wear and visible reminder of who they were and WHOSE they were. And then they were to tie a blue thread onto the four corners. Blue was a special colour to the Jews, the colour of the sky that covers all the earth it's another reminder that wherever they are, whatever they are doing God is there vitally involved in each moment.

Last week Kath talked to us about how we praise God – do we dance and rejoice, do we sing or swim, do we look for those special God moments in our days? Do we share our praise with others? When we've had an experience of God's grace, whether it is in a sunrise or a word of scripture or some shared laughter; do we share that with someone else so they can be blessed too? I want to encourage you to find a thread this week – and every time you have a God moment, whatever that is, tie a knot in your thread and then find someone to share it with. Those people around us who are harassed and lost like sheep without a shepherd, need to be reminded that just as the sky covers us all so

God's love covers us all and that He speaks to us in a whole lot of different ways, like knots on a thread.

Loving God, today we hear your word –
Come away with me to a quiet place;
And Lord, we feel like sheep without a shepherd,
As we watch what is happening around us,
As we listen to family and friends
Struggling with the challenges of being confined
As we hear stories of those caught in quarantine
Unable to be with dying loved ones
Losing jobs, losing hope,
We too are harassed and helpless;
Quiet our hearts to hear Your voice,
Fill us again with Your love
So that we can be Your quiet voice
To those around us.
Remind us that You are our peace
So that we can share that peace
We ask this through Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.
Amen.

Respond

Our prayer for others today is also our prayer for ourselves, “Leaning In: A Prayer of Intention” is a sung prayer of intercession that aims to break down the distinction between the typical “us” and “them:” of such prayers. It also shifts away from petition (asking God to do things) toward intention (setting a path of joining in what God is doing in the world). You can find sheet music for this song [here](https://youtu.be/rot5M9Kirhc) or you can listen to it:

<https://youtu.be/rot5M9Kirhc>

You might like to gather some candles and light them one at a time as you read or listen to the prayer.

We pray for the lonely ones
knowing that some of us are lonely
and we pray for the heartbroken ones
knowing that some of us are heartbroken
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of love in the world

We pray for the wounded
knowing that some of us are wounded
and we pray for the regretful ones
knowing that some of us are regretful
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of love in the healing

We pray for the starving ones
knowing that some of us are starving
and we pray for the imprisoned ones
knowing that some of us are imprisoned
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of justice in the world

We pray for the dying ones
knowing that some of us are dying
and we pray for the newly born ones
knowing that some of us are arriving
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of love in the world Amen.

Christopher Grundy (c) 2013 Hand and Soil Music

Benediction

The love of the faithful Creator,
the peace of the wounded Healer,
the joy of the challenging Spirit,
the hope of the Three in One
surround and encourage you,
today, tonight and forever.

(Source: Kathy Galloway, The Pattern Of Our Days, Wild Goose Publications, 1998)

Marion Haigh
16 July 2021