

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

SHEEPDOG

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

The good shepherd (John 10: 22-30)

John's Gospel speaks of Jesus as the good shepherd whose sheep hear and know his voice. The image of the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep to model the relationship between God and the people of God was already well established in the Old Testament as exemplified by Psalm 23. Throughout chapter 10 of his Gospel John develops this image to express who Jesus is. The theme reaches its climax in verse 11 with Jesus claiming 'I am the good shepherd.' This image has inspired many generations of Christians.

The image to stimulate reflection on Jesus as the good shepherd is *sheepdog*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 10: 27-30); for reflection throughout the week

Jesus said, 'My sheep hear my voice.
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they will never perish.
No one will snatch them out of my hand.
What my Father has given me is greater than all else,
and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand.
The Father and I are one.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Risen Lord,
you are the good shepherd
and we are your sheep.
Teach us to know you,
as well as you know us,
that we may dwell safely in your fold;
now and always.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 10: 22-30

Jesus Is Rejected by the Jews

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.' Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one.'

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 10: 22-30)

Begin to explore John's teaching about Jesus as the good shepherd who knows his sheep by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is the link between the Messiah and the shepherd?
- What is the force of Jesus' answer 'You do not belong to my sheep'?
- What is the force of Jesus' claim 'My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me'?
- What do you understand by 'The Father and I are one'?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Set this short passage from John in its wider context.

- John 10: 2-5
- John 10: 11-15

Explore the image of the shepherd in the Old Testament.

- 1 Samuel 16: 1-13
- 2 Samuel 7: 12-17
- Psalm 23
- Isaiah 40: 9-11

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (YEAR C) Sunday 11 May 2025

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of John's teaching about Jesus as the good shepherd by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Good Shepherd in the Old Testament
- Images of Jesus the good shepherd
- Videos of sheepdogs

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on John's teaching about Jesus as the good shepherd is *sheepdog*. Draw on your own experience of sheepdogs. For example:

- Have you watched sheepdogs at work in the countryside?
- Have you seen sheepdogs on film?
- With what other kinds of working dogs are you familiar?

What have you learned about sheepdogs?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by John's teaching about Jesus as the good shepherd or by the image of sheepdogs.

- Create a collage of sheep and sheepdogs.
- Make a poster about Jesus the good shepherd.
- Make a poster of different breeds of sheepdogs.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus the good shepherd or on the image of sheep dogs.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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