

## EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

# SHEEP

### EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

#### *Introducing the Gospel*

##### *The good shepherd (John 10: 1-10)*

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 John's Gospel 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 John's teaching about the good shepherd is *sheep*.

#### *Core extract from the Gospel (John 10: 1-4; for reflection throughout the week)*

Jesus said, '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.'

#### *Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)*

Risen Lord,  
you are the good shepherd  
and we are called to follow you.  
Teach us to hear your voice  
and to learn from your teaching,  
that we may dwell safely in your fold;  
now and always.  
Amen.

**READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL**

**John 10: 1-10**

**Jesus the Good Shepherd**

‘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.

## **ENGAGING WITH THE THEME**

### ***Dwelling with the text (John 10: 1-10)***

Begin to explore John's teaching about the good shepherd 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 do you understand by the shepherd calling the sheep by name?
- What do you understand by the shepherd going ahead of the sheep?
- Why is Jesus using this image?
- What is meant by 'I came that they may have life'?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

### ***Using your Bible***

This whole passage, John 10: 1-30 is distinctive of John's way of writing. Compare this narrative with passages about sheep in Matthew and Luke.

- Matthew 18: 12-14
- Luke 15: 4-6

Explore key passages from the Old Testament that employ images of sheep.

- Psalm 23
- Psalm 78: 53-56
- Psalm 79: 14
- Psalm 95: 1-7
- Psalm 119: 169-176
- Ezekiel 34: 11-15

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (YEAR A) Sunday 26 April 2026

### *Exploring online*

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

- Jesus and sheep in the catacombs
- YouTube sheep
- Making model sheep

### *Drawing on experience*

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

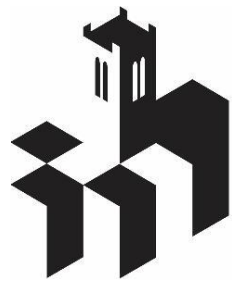
- What is your experience of sheep in the UK or elsewhere?
- What is your experience of the image of sheep in churches?
- What is your experience of Jesus as the good shepherd in your life?

What have you learned about sheep?

### *Creating and making*

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

- Find pictures of sheep and pictures of Jesus the good shepherd to set side-by-side.
- Make models of sheep, or cut out shapes of sheep, to display.
- Make a collage of a rural hillside and populate it with sheep.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Jesus the good shepherd or on the image of sheep.



# Liverpool Cathedral

## 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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