

Welcome

Call to Worship - “Your steadfast love, O Lord, is as great as all the Heavens.
Your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.
Your justice is as solid as the mountains.
Your decisions are as full of wisdom as the oceans are with water.
You are concerned for men and animals alike.
How precious is Your constant love, O Lord our God!
All humanity takes refuge in You.” - *Psalm 36 v 5-7*

Hymn 519 - Love Divine all loves excelling (*Blaenwern*)

Love divine all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down
Fix in us thy humble dwelling
All thy faithful mercies crown
Jesus thou art all compassion
Pure unbounded love thou art
Visit us with thy salvation
Enter every trembling heart

Come almighty to deliver
Let us all thy life receive
Suddenly return and never
Never more thy temples leave
Thee we would be always blessing
Serve thee as thy hosts above
Pray and praise thee without ceasing,
Glory in thy perfect love

Finish then thy new creation
Pure and spotless let us be
Let us see thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in thee
Changed from glory into glory
Till in heaven we take our place
Till we cast our crowns before thee
Lost in wonder love and praise
Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayer and Lord's Prayer (sins)

Lord, our God, we adore You and praise You.
You have rescued us from all our sins
from the penalty of death and eternal separation
You have set us free, free to be Your children,
Free from sin and guilt
Free to be what You want us to be.

Lord, Your love is constant
And You long for us to share in that love with You

Forgive us Father for the times we have neglected You
And Your love
For the times when we have ignored those around us
And thought only of ourselves
Help us to learn from Jesus Your Son
From how He showed love to all around Him

Thank you Lord for Your watchfulness & concern
Thank You that You are always with us -
In times of happiness & in times of sorrow
In times of triumph & in times of defeat
Knowing that You are always there
We need never be afraid.

Father God, we bring our offerings to You this day
We bring them as an expression of our love for You
Receive now our gifts,
For we know that we are simply giving back to You
A tiny part of that which You have so graciously given to us.

And hear us now Lord, as we join together
In the prayer which Jesus taught us:

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name
Your Kingdom come, Your will be done
On Earth as in Heaven
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours
Now and for ever.
Amen.

Old Testament Reading - Ezekiel 34 v 11-16 (*The Message*) - Fiona Corbett

11-16 “God, the Master, says: From now on, I myself am the shepherd. I’m going looking for them. As shepherds go after their flocks when they get scattered, I’m going after my sheep. I’ll rescue them from all the places they’ve been scattered to in the storms. I’ll bring them back from foreign peoples, gather them from foreign countries, and bring them back to their home country. I’ll feed them on the mountains of Israel, along the streams, among their own people. I’ll lead them into lush pasture so they can roam the mountain pastures of Israel, graze at leisure, feed in the rich pastures on the mountains of Israel. And I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep. I myself will make sure they get plenty of rest. I’ll go after the lost, I’ll collect the strays, I’ll doctor the injured, I’ll build up the weak ones and oversee the strong ones so they’re not exploited.

Hymn 682 (CH3) - Lead, kindly Light

1. LEAD, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead thou me on;

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene, - one step enough for me.

2. I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
Lead thou me on;
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.
3. So long thy power have blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till,
The night is gone
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

John Henry Newman, 1801 - 1890

Prayer - *Mark Corbett*

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Almighty God, we know that the Christian code is firmly embedded in the concept of community, and that the combination of love, service and fellowship we enjoy, adds huge value and meaning to our lives.

Our craft incorporations strengthen that sense of community, forming a unique bond amongst their membership and beyond. As we approach that great coming-together that is the Common Riding, when we salute the sacred past and look forward to a future filled with security and compassion, we remember those communities throughout the world that have been pulled apart by war and poverty, disease and famine.

We pray for the communities in Ukraine that once were content and secure, but now find it impossible to survive amidst the ravages of war. We appreciate and celebrate our love of family and home. We are horrified and sad, therefore, to see others lose what is most precious to them. Lord, fill the hearts of those who act aggressively with love and compassion, so that all fighting may cease and communities may be rebuilt, and peace restored.

We pray for those who will struggle with the rising cost of living. The importance of community cannot be underestimated in such circumstances. When communities break down, the disconnect leads to suspicion, intolerance and animosity, and the tendency to be selfish. Lord, make Your spirit to dwell within all of us, and grant us the will always to spread your love far beyond our own hearts, and help others in the times of austerity.

Almighty God, we pray for the lonely and dispossessed, and for those who suffer illness, injury or bereavement at this time. Let them know, through our acts of compassion, that they are loved and that they are a part of a loving, caring community.

Lord, we ask that those who make important decisions on our behalf – decisions that will affect our future health, well-being, indeed our very existence – may be filled with your Holy Spirit.

We pray for Selkirk United Crafts, who play such an important role in holding our community together. Lord, nurture and encourage their dedication and good works, and make us all more aware of your Holy Spirit at work within us, and in all we seek to accomplish.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Hymn - In Christ alone

In Christ alone my hope is found
He is my light my strength my song
This Cornerstone this solid ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love what depths of peace
When fears are stilled when strivings cease
My comforter my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand

In Christ alone who took on flesh
Fulness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
'Til on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live

There in the ground His body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave He rose again
And as He stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from His hand
'Til He returns or calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand

Bible Teaching - Luke 15 v 1-7 (*The Message*) - “*The Shepherd’s Joy!*”

One of the differences I have noticed between my former city Parish and the more rural parishes here in the Borders, is that there are far more sheep down here than in Aberdeen!

Not just in the surrounding fields and hillsides, but also on the roads!

Last Sunday morning driving up to Etrick Church, I had to avoid three of them, one with a large lamb in tow!

The very first sermon I preached here was on Psalm 23 - The Lord’s my Shepherd.

And this morning I’d like to continue on that theme with the Parable of the Lost Sheep - or as William Barclay names it:
‘The Shepherd’s Joy!’

LUKE 15 v 1-7 (The Message)

15¹⁻³ *By this time a lot of men and women of questionable reputation were hanging around Jesus, listening intently. The Pharisees and religion scholars were not pleased, not at all pleased. They growled, "He takes in sinners and eats meals with them, treating them like old friends." Their grumbling triggered this story.*
4-7 *"Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, 'Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!' Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue."*

Shepherds in Judaea had very difficult and hazardous jobs. Pasture was scarce, the narrow central plateau in the land was only a few miles wide and then it plunged down to the wild cliffs and the dry, barren desert.

There were no dykes or fences as we have here, so the sheep would often wander into these dangerous areas.

George Adam Smith writes:

"On some high moor, across which at night, the hyenas howl; when you meet him, sleepless, far-sighted, weather-beaten, armed, leaning on his staff and looking out over his scattered sheep, everyone of them in his heart -

You understand why the shepherd of Judaea sprang to the front in his people's history; why they gave his name to the King and made him the symbol of protection....

And why Christ took him as the example of self-sacrifice.

Jesus tells us in John chapter 10:

"I am the Good Shepherd.....

I know My sheep and they know Me
and I lay down My life for them!"

The shepherd was personally responsible for his sheep, if a sheep was lost, the shepherd had to, at least, bring home it's body to show how it had died.

The shepherds were experts at tracking and could follow a straying sheep's trail for miles across the hills.

It was all in a day's work for the shepherd
He had to be willing to risk his own life to protect the animals in his care.

Many of the flocks were communal flocks, with two or three shepherds looking after them on behalf of the whole community.

The shepherds might arrive home to their village with news that their flocks were safe, but that one shepherd was still out on the mountainside, searching for a sheep which was lost.

The whole village would be on the lookout

And, when in the distance they saw that shepherd striding happily down the hillside, with the lost sheep on his shoulders - a great shout of joy would rise up from them - the lost sheep had been found, alive and well!

So what is Jesus saying to you and me today in this parable?

He's saying that GOD is like that shepherd who searched high and low for His lost sheep "and home, rejoicing brought him," as we will sing later.

The over-arching theme of the story is the love of the Shepherd for His sheep - for every last one of them.

No matter how many hundreds of other sheep the Shepherd has - He is deeply concerned about the one who is lost.

He will stop at nothing to go out and search for that lost sheep - determined to find it, to rescue it and bring it back into the fold.

In the passage from Ezekiel, which Fiona read for us, God tells us that He Himself is our Shepherd, that He will come looking for us when we stray, that He will rescue us and bring us back to Him.

We are reassured that He will save us,
that God loves each one of us so much that He will do all that He can to bring us back to Him.

The prophet Isaiah tells us:
"We're all like sheep who've wandered off and become lost.
We've all done our own thing and gone our own way."

And that is true!
Each one of us, without exception, has wandered off, like a lost sheep.
Each one of us is in danger - in danger of death - eternal death and separation from
the One who made us and loves us and longs for us to be with Him.

Each one of us needs to be RESCUED!

Each one of us needs to be BROUGHT BACK!

Each one of us needs to be RESTORED to the relationship with God which man and womankind had with Him in the beginning!

God loves us too much to just let us go!
He loves us so much that:
"He gave His only Son, so that whoever believes in Him MAY NOT BE LOST, but have ETERNAL LIFE!!!"

God loves us, loves each one of us, with
a love, which as the hymn writer puts it:
"Will never let us go!"

God is not content to let us go!
No matter how unworthy we may think we are - we are precious to God.

How do I know?
Because He Himself tells us!

"You are PRECIOUS to Me & HONOURED and I LOVE YOU! - Isaiah 43 v 4.

The Almighty and All Powerful God looks at you and me - AND LOVES US!

God truly believes that WE ARE WORTH SAVING!

To paraphrase a famous advertising slogan:

“God sent His only Son - BECAUSE YOU’RE WORTH IT!”

He is not prepared to let us go.

He is not content for any of us to be lost.

He will do all that He can to bring us back to Himself!

Our Father in Heaven does not want any of us, no matter who we are, to be lost!

Again, how do I know?

Because Jesus tells us!

In Matthew’s Gospel we have this same parable:

“Jesus said: ‘Look at it this way.

If someone had 100 sheep and one of them wanders off, doesn’t he leave the 99 and go after the one?

And when he finds it, doesn’t he make far more over it than over the 99 who stay put?

Your Father in Heaven feels the same way

He doesn’t want to lose even one of these simple believers!”

God wants to FIND US when we are lost!

God wants to RESCUE US!

God wants to MAKE A FUSS OVER US!

And God is only happy WHEN WE ARE FOUND AND HE CAN BRING US HOME!

We may be lost, but God never gives up on us.

God never says to Himself:

“ Well that’s it - he’s gone, I’ll never find him, he’s lost forever. I’ve tried looking for him, I’ve searched high and low, but to no avail - never mind!”

Our loving Father never says that!

Our caring Shepherd never gives up!

He keeps on looking, He keeps on searching, He keeps on until He finds us!

He NEVER gives up on us - no matter WHO we are or WHAT we have done!

In the Book of Revelation, the risen Jesus says these words:

“Listen, I’m standing at the door of your life & I’m knocking, I’m asking to come in.

If ANYONE hears Me and opens the door,

I WILL COME IN & be with them, ALWAYS!

OUR FATHER never gives up on us - because He loves us so much!

JESUS never gives up on us -

because He loves us also!

Jesus is most persistent -
He keeps on knocking.
He keeps on asking.
He never gives up!

Many of you here this morning have responded to Him - you have asked Him to come into your life - & He has done so.

Jesus has come into your life by His Holy Spirit. His Spirit lives IN YOU and will ALWAYS be with you.

To LEAD you, to GUIDE you, to INSPIRE you, to COMFORT you, to STRENGTHEN you, to CHALLENGE you, to ENCOURAGE you, to ENLIVEN you.

But perhaps you have never heard Jesus knocking on the door of your life and asking to come in.

If so, may I encourage you to LISTEN.

Listen carefully, take time to be still before the Lord, to quieten yourself
In His presence.

Be like little Samuel in the Temple,
who said: "Speak Lord, for Your servant is listening."

And if you do that, and you believe that Jesus is speaking to YOU -

Then RESPOND to His gracious request.

ASK HIM to come into your life by His Holy Spirit, to change your life from within and to be right there with you and for you, ALWAYS!

The Parable of the Lost Sheep.
The story of 'The Shepherd's Joy.'

Please listen to the words of this hymn:

"Souls of all, why will ye scatter
Like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts, why will ye wander
From a love so true and deep?"

Was there ever kinder Shepherd
Half so gentle, half so sweet
As the Saviour who would have us
Come and gather round His feet?

And finally, those words of Jesus in Revelation -

Are YOU hearing His words today?

"Listen, I am standing at the door of your life, knocking - asking to come in.

If you hear Me and open the door,
I WILL come in & be with you - ALWAYS!"

Hymn 381 (CH3) - I will sing the wondrous story (*Hyfrydol*)

1. I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me, -
How he left the realms of glory
For the cross on Cavalry:
*Yes, I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me, -
Sing it with His saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.*
2. I was lost but Jesus found me
Found the sheep that went astray,
Raised me up and gently led me
Back into the narrow way:
3. Faint was I, and fears possessed me,
Bruised was I from many a fall:
Hope was gone, and shame distressed me:
But His love has pardoned all:
4. Days of darkness still may meet me,
Sorrows path I oft may tread;
But his presence still is with me,
By His guiding hand I'm led.
5. He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet:
Then he'll bear me safely over,
Made by grace for glory meet.
Francis Harold Rowley (1854-1952)

Benediction - 'And now may
the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all, now and forevermore.'

(3 fold Amen)