

Sermon – Fourth Sunday of Easter - Acts 2.42-47; Psalm 23; 1 Peter 2.19-25; John 10.1-10

Today in the church is what is known as Vocation Sunday – it's a time when we think about where God might be calling us – for some it is to ordained ministry but for many it is something else..

For me, I was a PA working in London – loved my job – had an encounter at the cathedral fair one day – felt a homecoming into a church I had left some 30 years before – and after starting back going to church services remembered the moment in a service when I felt strongly that God wanted me to share and use my life story and experiences – to show how the gospel – good new promises – actually still happen today – and are relevant — and through Jesus we can learn ways to live life and make choices that are more authentic and life-giving for us and those around us. The rest is history..

And this is what happened to the disciples when they came together as a community with Jesus at the centre....

We hear how they lived in community – sharing all they had – praying – sharing food and thanking and praising God with generous hearts – and the community grew...

There were no worldly goods to think of – just spiritual communion – a community of heart and mind. And the sense of being saved came when - having been called by Jesus to follow him – and by hearing that voice and being compelled – they found more meaning and purpose to their lives and a greater peace along the way.

And that is the model for church – Jesus the head of a community of people who all wanted to live out his teachings of love, justice and peace – and support each other along the way of working for others in his name.

Being saved therefore – meant that doing the worldly living with the intentional purpose to do it in Jesus' name of justice peace and love brought a richer sense of purpose and belonging - there was a freedom to be able to be free to live in the world without it having a grip on them.

And even today – when we are in lockdown and can't access our familiar worldly places and goods – we are called to enjoy the relationship with God in a community of faith – getting to know each other once again – nature once again – and how good it feels to share what we have with one another – again... And we can pray for each other with each other...

And so then we come to the lovely comforting assurance that we have a gatekeeper – shepherd of the flock - Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep.

And – to one of the most promising verses of scripture - . I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

Jesus is saying to his followers – his flock – don't listen to the voices of the world that are in it for their own gain - and more especially do not listen to the voices of the religious orders of the day – the ones who are also in it for their own gain – Listen to me – hear my voice...

God is the gatekeeper – Jesus is the shepherd of the sheep – and leads them safely.

By following the good shepherd – the flock is led out – and brought in – there might be dangers out there – but the shepherd is with them and will do all he can to keep them safe and protected –

And for us following Jesus the good shepherd today – it doesn't mean that we won't get caught up in struggles of the world and sorrows of the world – but like the Psalm 23 tells us – the Lord is our shepherd and we won't be wanting when it comes to having an inner peace and strength and comfort no matter what is going on.

The gate has two sides – in and out of the world – and with Jesus as the gate keeper – he mediates for us – linking heaven and earth – in the promise that green pastures and still water peace awaits –

But – by following him – he show us that we can have that sense of peace in the worldly side of life when we stay close and follow him – and always trusting that in the time to come when we enter into the metaphorical gate of heaven – that peace that passes understanding will be fully known...

So what about today – I wonder if you might be restless – might be thinking there's something more for me to be doing – or something different – perhaps something within the church – or within your community – or even within your family community...

Do you feel there is a small voice inside of you – sometimes not literally a voice but a kind of nudge – especially today when we are thinking so much more of other's needs – amazing generosity of spirit and kindness has outpoured during this time – bringing out the best of us, warming the heart – perhaps there is a call being made on you to go a little deeper into the purpose of your own life...

This time is certainly offering Food for thought.

And so as we come together in our spiritual communion today – and our physical communion around the Lord's table in days to come – we can remember that breaking bread together is the symbolic essence of what it means to live out the most loving sense of community – and purpose - and a symbolic way to give thanks that at the heart of all that is good and meaningful and true is shown to us through Jesus – our mediator – our advocate – our friend – our good shepherd...

I pray that we find the stillness in this time to hear his voice and to follow his call on our hearts and our lives – as Jesus says to every one of us 'I am the good shepherd - I came that you may have life, and have it abundantly. Amen