

## Morning Worship and Spiritual Communion

Fourth Sunday of Easter 3 May 2020

Gates, gateways and gatekeepers



### Opening prayer

This season of stay-at-home and quarantine,  
of social distancing and face masks,  
seems to dull my senses, Lord,  
so I pray that in the days ahead you'll:

help me see the world with your eyes, Lord:  
clearly, with wisdom and insight,  
neither ignoring nor fixating  
on whatever I'd rather not see...

help me hear with your open ears, Lord:  
listening carefully, with true compassion,  
especially to those with whom I'm living...

help me touch others' hearts with your hands, Lord:  
gently and firmly, with healing  
- even from six feet away...

help me taste of life as you made it, Lord,  
savouring the salty, relishing the sweet,  
learning to accept the sour:  
make me mindful of those who are hungry these days  
and generous when I reach out to help...

help me breathe in all you've inspired, Lord  
sniffing the scent of the fresh and fragrant  
especially outdoors on these early spring days...

In this pandemic season, Lord,  
help me to see, hear, touch, taste and smell  
your glory in the world around me:  
help me use all my senses to come to know you,  
to love you and to serve you in any way I can...

Amen.

*From [concordpastor.blogspot.com/](http://concordpastor.blogspot.com/) the site of a Catholic priest from Concord, Michigan USA.*



## **We seek forgiveness**

We are often not the Easter People  
that we should be,  
living in the certain knowledge  
of your great mercy and love.  
Distracted by the world around us  
we fail to hear your voice,  
or hide when faith is challenged  
as we wander off the path.

Forgive us, we pray;  
restore the love that we first had,  
a faith that can endure.  
We will keep our eyes fixed on you, Lord,  
and with you at our right hand  
we shall not be shaken.

Risen Christ, be in what we do, inform what we say, redeem who we are. Amen

## **Alternative collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter.**

Risen Christ,  
faithful shepherd of your Father's sheep:  
teach us to hear your voice  
and to follow your command,  
that all your people may be gathered into one flock,  
to the glory of God the Father.

## **The psalm appointed for today is Psalm 23 – well known to everyone here.**

*You now may like to use this link to hear the Choir of Wells Cathedral sing: The Lord is my Shepherd.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLxdb3ov-zE>

## **Reading**

John 10 1-10 New Living Translation (NLT)

The Good Shepherd and His Sheep

**10** "I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! <sup>2</sup> But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup> The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup> After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup> They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."

<sup>6</sup>Those who heard Jesus use this illustration didn't understand what he meant, <sup>7</sup>so he explained it to them: "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before me were thieves and robbers. But the true sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup>Yes, I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. They will come and go freely and will find good pastures. <sup>10</sup>The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

### **Comment** (from Keith)

I have to confess that I had forgotten this one of Jesus's 'I am' statements that are such a feature of John's Gospel. We are far more used to one from the following verses from this reading: 'I am the good shepherd.' But here we are with Jesus as the gate. I think that for many of us – and certainly at present – the tendency is to think of a gate as something that is shut. Something or someone is being locked down, locked in or locked out.

In Biblical times there seems to have been two main types of sheepfold. One is a permanent one, perhaps sited closer to a settlement with stone walls and in two parts – an inner totally enclosed space for the worst of weathers, and an outer open area enclosed by a wall. As needed there would be a gatekeeper or watchman to open any actual gate. (A gate could not open itself – someone had to do it, so the gatekeeper is in effect the same as the gate.)

When the sheep were out in the open and too far away from a permanent enclosure, the shepherd could construct a simple enclosure from thorn bushes and he would most likely lie to sleep across the entrance to deter any wild beasts.

So in this way we can see Jesus as being at the same time the gate, the gatekeeper and the shepherd.

The gate is not seen as the barrier as we tend to do, but as the way in or out – the gateway.

If we are looking for a modern word that conjures up the same images we could turn to 'portal'. We enter websites through portals, which check our identity and grant us access to the site's resources. Normally if you have forgotten your password, the portal will enable you to create a new one, or if you are a newcomer and want to come through the portal and access the site, it will readily organise that for you.

So rather than see a gate as a block, we should see it as a means of gaining access, something that is usually open rather than closed, and entering is a matter of our choice. But if portals or gates are usually open rather than shut, then what is the point of a gatekeeper?

Richard Skinner explores this idea in his poem the Gatekeeper.

## A Gatekeeper Speaks Out (John 10: 7-10)

My role as a gate-keeper,  
my job description as it were,  
is straightforward enough:  
on the one hand to admit the chosen,  
those with the correct documentation,  
they who are willing to abide by  
the way we do things here;  
on the other hand to keep out the disreputable,  
those who fail the necessary tests,  
they who practise alien practices,  
refusing to conform. Riff-raff, I would say.  
I take pride in my work,  
welcoming the *bona fide*,  
spotting the fraud,  
discriminating between the two, and when necessary  
erring on the side of caution and the status quo.  
I have the medals and commendations  
to prove my worth.

But this other chap I've heard of,  
who claims to be a gate itself,  
not simply a *gate-keeper*,  
clearly has no notion at all  
about *real* gates and gate-keeping,  
either pure or applied.

“Anyone,”  
he maintains, who enters through him,  
“will be safe.” A dubious assertion.  
I find that he is not even a member of  
The Amalgamated Union of Gates  
& Gate-Keepers; he has  
no commendations, no medals,  
hangs around with riff-raff,  
and is often in trouble with the powers-that-be.  
Who, I wonder, let him in?

We must beware of him:  
he is liable to give all gates and gatekeepers  
a bad name.

*Richard Skinner 2020*

So if anyone who wants to can ‘enter through him’, how can they be sure they are safe? Possible answers lie in the idea that passing through the portal of Jesus has a transforming effect. Jesus goes on to say later in verse 16 that there are other sheep not of this sheepfold that he still will bring in, so there is ultimately just one flock. A flock created by transforming and unifying love.



*Modern gatekeeper in Nigeria.*

Take the opportunity to listen to 'God Welcomes All' an arrangement by Nigel Walsh of a South African song. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-Bwe5xzQAA&list=PLgBLixTy9an6PsLU8VmWzdVSVMNzUGSIW&index=9&t=0s>



*A very early fresco of Christ The Good Shepherd dating from about 200 in the ceiling of a small chapel within the Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome.*

*The image of a shepherd caring for his flock was well known in Roman times so predating its Christian use.*

*The artist also seems familiar with the representation of pastoral scenes in Roman houses.*

*Christ is shown very simply, no beard, no halo, a very human portrayal.*

### **Intercessions (from the Anglican Chaplaincy in Costa Blanca, Spain.)**

Lord, you are our Shepherd and we pray that you will protect us from all danger, especially in this time of Lockdown, by keeping watch over us, guide us towards green pastures where we can be nourished by your word and lead us to pure still waters where we can be refreshed by your love.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Lord, you are our Shepherd and we pray for our church leaders that they too may care for and lead us by following the example of love and service you demonstrated in your earthly ministry. We especially pray today for all of our clergy and church members who through the Internet and Social Media are keeping us in touch and sharing words of encouragement.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Lord, you are our Shepherd and we pray for the world that was given to us as an inheritance, on the understanding that we would care for it as shepherds care for their flocks. Teach us to look after our beautiful planet and care for it wisely, whilst sharing its gifts more fairly and working together with all of its inhabitants to ease its sufferings.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Lord, you are our Shepherd and we pray for our families and friends who need to hear the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd; who knows every one of them by name; who offers rest to the weary and salvation to sinners and life eternal to all who accept him into their lives.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Lord, you are our Shepherd who seeks out the lost and the sick. We pray for those we know who are lost in illness and ask you to reassure them with the knowledge that you are watching over them in their suffering and that many are praying for their recovery.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Lord, you are our Shepherd so we pray for those who have died and for those who ache with sorrow in their loss of a loved one. May those we now name before you find rest in the Spirit's embrace as you welcome them into the great sheepfold, safe in your keeping for ever.

Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer

Lord, you are our Shepherd, and we offer our prayers now for all people and their situations. For lives that are going through upheaval or distress caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and in circumstances which only you can change.

Merciful father: accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

### **A short Spiritual Communion**

The Book of Common Prayer reminds us that if we offer ourselves in penitence and faith, giving thanks for the redemption won by Christ crucified, we may truly 'eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ', even when we cannot receive the sacrament physically in ourselves.

*You may wish to listen to Kyrie Eleison thanks to Nigel and the choir of St Davids. These are part of an Advent service, but still quite relevant!*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLzrlxQ9QMo>

*Worship in the early Christian communities was in Greek, and the Kyrie is the surviving element of those services that remained untranslated into Latin when the western church adopted that language.*

Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.

O God,  
help me to trust you,  
help me to know that you are with me,  
help me to believe that nothing can separate me from your love  
revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Giving thanks for Christ's death and resurrection you may wish to say*

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits you have given me,  
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.  
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,  
I ask you to come spiritually into my heart.  
O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother,  
may I know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

*(after the Prayer of St Richard of Chichester)*

### **Closing Prayers**

behind the masks  
across the six-foot divides  
Christ arises

on this virus-infected Easter  
let us come  
with our tears and fears

experience the emptiness  
the loss and despair  
of world-wide grief

may we also see  
benediction in the rising and setting sun  
new life all around us

Christ is risen  
the promise of steadfast love  
the hope of eternal life continue

Breathe deeply



God shows no partiality  
and always provides

Grace in the wilderness  
in the fear-filled places  
in the heaviness of grief

may we see Christ  
in every face  
in every place

may we breathe in  
the scent of hope  
the promise of new life

from this moment  
be forever changed  
by Love for Love

Christ is risen  
Christ is risen indeed  
Alleluia

go in peace  
thanks be to God  
amen

*taken from a longer prayer by Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe, pastor of Living Table United Church of Christ  
in Minneapolis, USA From [revgalsblogpals.org](http://revgalsblogpals.org)*

**Please scroll down to next page for evening prayer**

## Night Prayer



If you are able to do so, you might wish to light a candle near a window.

### Opening prayer:

Spirit of the Risen Christ,  
As the lamps light up the evening,  
Shine in our hearts and kindle in us the fire of your love.

### Compline

*Today for night prayer we are using a service of the Office of Compline written originally by Boisil, the Prior of Melrose Abbey, Scotland, who died in 661. St Cuthbert became one of Boisil's pupils.*

*Taken from Boisil's Compline from Northumbria Community's Celtic Daily Prayer published by Collins.*

O Lord, You will keep us safe  
and protect us forever.

I am placing my soul and my body  
in Thy safe keeping this night, O God,  
in Thy safe keeping, O Jesus Christ,  
in Thy safe keeping, O Spirit of perfect truth.

The Three who would defend my cause  
be keeping me this night from harm.  
I call on You, O God,  
for You will answer me;  
give ear to me and hear my prayer.

Show the wonder of Your great love,  
You who save by Your right hand  
those who take refuge in You from their foes.

Keep me as the apple of Your eye;  
hide me in the shadow of your wings.

*Lighten my darkness, Lord.  
Let the light of Your presence  
dispel the shadows of night.*

Christ with me sleeping,  
Christ with me waking,  
Christ with me watching,  
each day and each night.

Save us, Lord, while we are awake,  
guard us while we are asleep;  
that, awake, we may watch with Christ,  
and, asleep, may rest in His peace.

God with me protecting,  
the Lord with me directing,  
the Spirit with me strengthening  
for ever and for evermore.

In the name of the Father precious,  
and of the Spirit of healing balm.  
In the name of the Lord Jesus,  
I lay me down to rest.

The peace of all peace  
be mine this night  
in the name of the Father,  
and of the Son,  
and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

### **Closing**

You might like to access the website below for the Celtic prayer of blessing: Deep peace of the running wave to you.

<https://youtu.be/1OAZR4Avs0>

The words are below.

Deep peace of the running wave to you  
Deep peace of the flowing air to you  
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you  
Deep peace of the shining stars to you  
Deep peace of the gentle night to you  
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you

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Deep peace to you  
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