

Quest 25th April 2021

Have a look at this short video clip; it was filmed in the misty valleys of Norway:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Coq_grSFINs

It's a great introduction to today's Gospel which is Jesus explaining to his followers how he is the Good Shepherd who will even risk his life for his sheep.

John 10:11-18

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

I couldn't find a film of a shepherd calling his sheep by name, but the sheep obviously know their shepherd; they recognise his voice, they trust him and know he has come to feed them.

Think also for a moment about the ones who wandered away from the shepherd - what did they miss out on?

In the Middle East 2000 years ago Jesus would have been very aware of shepherds and their way of life. They were crucial to the welfare of the sheep, always looking out for them, rescuing them when they got stuck in a rocky spot, penning them at night to protect them from wolves. Often shepherds were teenagers - perhaps Jesus had helped to look after the village sheep when he was growing up?



But Jesus isn't talking about any shepherd, he is talking about the GOOD shepherd, the person who knows his flock very well, who is prepared to risk his life for them. He contrasts this with the "hired hand" which means the person hired perhaps for one day to look after the sheep; he doesn't know them and they don't know him.

Have you ever been taught by a supply teacher at school? Think about it; are you perhaps a little bit disappointed that your usual teacher is not there? Do you feel a bit nervous about having a teacher you don't know? Be honest - are you more likely to play up and not try so hard when a supply teacher is taking the class? The supply teacher is the 'hired hand' - they don't know you so well, you don't know them. (However, I hope that most of them will do their best for you!)



"I presume you're the substitute teacher?"



What this tells us is that relationships, knowing people and being part of a community are very important. We are always a bit suspicious of a stranger; we may not rush to help someone we don't know as much as we help our friends. Jesus is telling us that he knows us well and will always be there to look after us; he won't run away when things get tough. Even after he was crucified, he came back to show his followers that he was and will always be there, looking out for them - and for us.

Think for a moment about the 'communities' you belong to - your family, your school, your church, your neighbours, perhaps a sports club, scouts or brownies - communities where you are known by name and you are cared for, whether by parents or teachers or friends or group leaders. Part of growing up is moving gradually from being the sheep to being the shepherd; could you become a leader? Could you help those younger than you to learn a sport? Or perhaps you could help an old person in your family or neighbourhood? It may feel daunting, but Jesus, your parents, teachers and many others have done it for you and, yes, you'll discover you can do it for others.

Things to do:

1. Here's a simple prayer to say
"Thank you, Jesus, that we are your sheep;
that you care for us – awake or asleep;
that you know us as we grow day by day;
and for watching over us in work, rest and play.

2. Here's a lovely piece of music to listen to. Those of you in the choir may have sung it.

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

3. And here's how to make a pompom sheep:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVDWg5FeP7o>

