

Jesus laid down his life for me

Call to worship Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long. *Psalms 23:6*

Hymn StF 337 There is a higher throne <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zvDSG4s5FJw>

There is a higher throne 337
than all this world has known,
where faithful ones from every tongue
will one day come.

Before our God we'll stand,
made faultless through the Lamb ;
believing hearts find promised grace :
salvation comes.

*Hear heaven's voices sing,
their thunderous anthem rings
through emerald courts and sapphire skies,
their praises rise.*

*All glory, wisdom, power,
strength, thanks and honour are
to God, our King who reigns on high
for evermore.*

And there we'll find our home,
our life before the throne ;
we'll honour him in perfect song
where we belong.
He'll wipe each tear-stained eye,
as thirst and hunger die ;
the Lamb becomes our Shepherd King :
we'll reign with him.

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Kristyn Lennox

Prayer Good shepherd, of the sheep, by whom the lost are sought and guided into the fold:
feed us and we shall be satisfied; heal us and we shall be made whole; and lead us, that we may be with
you; for you are alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Reading 1 John 3:16-24 Love is: Jesus laid down his life for us

Gospel John 10:11-18 The Good Shepherd knows his sheep

Reflection

The context of our Gospel reading is that Jesus has just declared in verse 10 – “**I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.**” The passage that follows shows how these blessing are won – Jesus the Good Shepherd must die. The Good Shepherd is also the Lamb of God who suffers and dies. The symbolism runs through the Bible. In Exodus 12 and Passover night, lambs were slaughtered and the blood of the lamb smeared on the door lintels, so that as the angel of death touched the Egyptian homes and killed the first born, he “passed over” the Israelite homes marked with the blood of a lamb and Pharaoh gave permission for the Israelites to receive their freedom from slavery. In Isaiah 53, we are the sheep who have gone astray and our sins were laid on Jesus, the lamb of God who was led like a lamb to be slaughtered.

The ancestry of Jesus includes King David – who before being anointed to be King was a shepherd boy and knew the toughness of being a shepherd. It included fending off wild animals. The boy David declared that he has rescued sheep from the mouths of bears and lions – and killed the animals with his own hands (1 Samuel 17). He was a good shepherd who put his life at risk for the sake of the flock.

In both the gospel and epistle readings, John’s picture of the shepherd is his willingness to die for the sheep, and Jesus contrasts the good shepherd with the hired hand, who cares more for his own safety than the sheep because they don’t belong to him.

So John talks of love as sacrifice. Love does not destroy another’s life, whether in thought or deed. Love gives its own life so that another may live. *Jesus Christ laid down his life for us* demonstrates God’s definition of love. It is not mere sentiment or emotion, not simply words, but deeds. And the deeds are not empty gestures; they actively transform the situation. Jesus laid down his life as a ransom price, so that we might be set free. And he invites us to show our love for others by sacrificial love

For your reflection.

- 1) The imagery of a Shepherd knowing us and caring for us is beautiful. As Isaiah says, All we like sheep have gone astray. Have you been prepared to admit to Jesus that you have gone astray and know that he hasn't discarded you but like the father of the prodigal son is ready to welcome you back with open arms? Or are you more like the elder son – who has never gone astray but is distant from his Father and not living life to the full. The father loves and cares for you as well!
- 2) What is your story of knowing Jesus's call on your life? How did you respond? Would your story help someone you know, hear his voice for the first time?
- 3) Read Psalm 23, written by the shepherd boy David looking back at his time as a shepherd. Read it a couple of times weaving into it what Jesus said about the good shepherd.
- 4) The shepherd knows things the sheep cannot know. He understands their needs and leads and protects them. We are also called to pastorally care for one another. How might good shepherding change the way we do things?

Prayers

In the confidence of God's concern for the smallest detail of human living,
we offer our prayers for the world and ourselves.

We pray for those who find themselves in despair today:
people who have no sense of their own value,
people who have no confidence in the future,
people who suffer the effects of stigma of mental illness.

Silence

God of grace: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose days are formed of fear and longing:
parents who have no food for their children,
children who live in war zones and places of conflict,
carers who long for a break and a rest.

Silence

God of grace. **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those whose thoughts are too weighty to bear:
people living with the guilt of a past action,
people living with the shock of a difficult diagnosis,
people living with the burden of grief.

Silence

God of grace: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those in our church and community who need comfort:

Silence

God of grace: **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for ourselves, Help us to remember we are wonderfully made:
teach us to rely on your presence
and to see signs of your glory, teach us to replace hate with love,
and fear with knowledge,
teach us to care for others as you care for us .

Silence

God of grace: **Hear our prayer. Amen.**

Hymn StF 367 When I was lost

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=obg70dq_O6U

When I was lost, you came and rescued me ;
reached down into the pit and lifted me.
O Lord, such love, I was as far from you as I could be.
You know all the things I've ever done,
but Jesus' blood has cancelled every one.
O Lord, such grace to qualify me as your own.

*There is a new song in my mouth,
there is a deep cry in my heart,
a hymn of praise to Almighty God — hallelujah !
And now I stand firm on this Rock,
my life is hidden now with Christ in God.
The old has gone and the new has come — hallelujah !
Your love has lifted me.*

Now I have come into your family
for the Son of God has died for me.
O Lord, such peace,
I am as loved by you as I could be.
In the full assurance of your love,
now with every confidence we come.
O Lord, such joy
to know that you delight in us.

Refrain

Kate and Miles Simmonds

Blessing We go into the world transformed by the good shepherd who laid down his life for us that we might love as he loved us. **Thanks be to God. Amen**