

**Worship for third Sunday after Easter - 25th
April 2021**

from Jeanne Moore

Good morning everyone. Once again it is a pleasure to have written today's Worship sheet, and I only wish I could deliver it to you in person. Know that you are in my thoughts and prayers every day.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3 : 5 – 6) .

Suggested hymn : Lord I lift your name on high

LORD, I LIFT YOUR NAME ON HIGH;

Lord, I love to sing Your praises.

I'm so glad You're in my life;

I'm so glad You came to save us.

You came from heaven to earth to show the way,

From the earth to the cross,

My debt to pay.

From the cross to the grave,

From the grave to the sky,

Lord, I lift Your name on high

Prayer.

Great and wonderful God we praise and honour you. We praise you that whoever we are and wherever we go, you are present, preparing the way, waiting with arms of love and mercy to hold us and to welcome us. We praise you for your love and truth made known in your Word made flesh in Jesus; his dying and his rising. We praise you now and always. **Amen.**

A confession:

Please make this prayer your own, reading carefully and thoughtfully:

“Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psalm 51:10)

Reading: Ps 81 : 8 - 16

8 Hear me, my people, and I will warn you— if you would only listen to me, Israel! **9** You shall have no foreign god among you; you shall not worship any god other than me. **10** I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. **11** “But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. **12** So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. **13** “If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways, **14** how quickly I would

subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes! **15** Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him, and their punishment would last forever. **16** But you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Comment on Psalm 81

Joy in obedience – Honey from the rock

God is saying very clearly – don't listen to other gods. Listen to me. It is for your own good. His ways are perfect, he will guide us and care for us - feed us. “Open your mouth wide and I will fill it” He will give us the goodness we need to sustain us.

If we obey him, then even the hard times and the suffering (the rock) can produce a sweetness of fellowship with him (the honey). In the cross there is the ultimate example of triumph coming out of defeat – honey from the hardness. We must try to resist wandering off on our own. Be aware of God's presence beside us. Listen for that still, small voice.

Meditation

Listen, to the gentle lapping of the waves

It is the breath of God.

Listen, to the roaring of the waves

It is the power of God.

Listen, to the shifting sands

It is the whisper of the Lord.

Listen, to the music and the song

they are the joy of God.

Listen to the rain and the mist

they are the tears of God.

Listen, to the sound of the snow

they are the sympathy of the Lord.

Listen, to the restlessness of your heart

the depth of your feelings,

the ideas of your mind,

it is the Lord who speaks.

Listen, to the silence,

to the noise,

it is the Lord who speaks.

Answer Him.

Reading John 10 : 1 – 10

¹“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by

name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. ⁷Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full

Reflection

Today is the 4th Sunday of Easter and we look at the familiar passage of The Good Shepherd and His sheep.

Here Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees. They are supposed to be the shepherds of Israel, caring and protecting their flock, but they are more intent on guarding their own power and authority rather than the well being of the people.

Jesus is of course the true shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd promised by God. This shepherd approaches his flock differently. With love. He enters through the gate to take care of his sheep, not to oppress them. He enters the sheepfold and calls the sheep by name; calls them out to follow Him.

The sheep gladly follow because they recognise Jesus' voice and therefore know they are safe and free to follow. The Good Shepherd guards and protects his flock from danger. He provides for their nourishment and their life, in abundance. But if we are Jesus' true sheep and safely inside the sheepfold, we must not think of others as being outsiders. The gate is not to keep other sheep out, indeed Jesus will go out and bring those other sheep to the safety of the fold. The gate is to keep out all that might threaten us. Today there are many things to tempt us to stray. TV ads tell us that whatever we want, we should have, can have. That we can put ourselves first, that we are the most important and that everything bad that happens is someone else's fault. That is not the life in abundance that Jesus promises. It does not lead to eternal life, indeed true life in abundance begins here and now. It is knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ who God has sent to lead us to it.

The voice of the Good Shepherd who truly cares for his flock, will always care for his flock. We know that because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit sent by Jesus. The Holy

Spirit – our constant companion, a sort of shepherd who is there to guide, help and strengthen us as we follow the Lord. All we need to do is to listen for the voice of Jesus. But of course when he calls we must make sure we are in earshot.

A Prayer.

Loving Father, your son Jesus Christ suffered for our sins. By his wounds we were healed. Loving Shepherd of your sheep, we ask for the grace and courage to follow you along the path of self giving love. You are our Shepherd, there is nothing we shall want. Amen..

The Lord's Prayer (traditional version):

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; .
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: The Lord's my Shepherd

THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD, I'll not want.
He makes me lie in pastures green.
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone.
And I will trust in You alone,
For Your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,
And He anoints my head with oil,
And my cup, it overflows with joy,
I feast on His pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,
I will not fear the evil one,
For You are with me, and Your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

The blessing: Now may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be with and remain with us always. **Amen.**