

2021-04-25 ... 10am Morning Worship Sermon ... Revd Sue Armstrong

Acts 4: 5 – 12; 1 John 3: 16 – end; John 10: 11 – 18

Last week I commented that our readings often seem to begin in places that require you to refer to the passages that went before them ...

This week is no exception – we are still thinking **in Acts** about the healing at the Beautiful Gate by Peter and John.

The Priestly family (it was important to keep things within the family, *we call it nepotism*) are all gathered and Peter and John, prisoners, are made to stand in front of them – we can imagine how like bullying the questioning was.

Peter's response is quietly impressive – as he speaks of the good deed done and proclaims it as done in the name of Jesus **“whom you crucified”!**

In our Epistle we are reminded that we are part of God's family ... (we can contrast this with the power-seeking Caiaphas' family) and that bond means showing care for one another ... Addressed as **“little children”** it's not patronising but rather an endearment – a reminder of being safe in God's care, wanting to do what pleases Him, seeking to emulate Jesus in His love and trust in God whom He called **“Abba, Father”**.

The reminder is that it is not what is said that achieves this, but what is done, how it is lived. With trust in God we can ask His help, and following Jesus we know that through His death and resurrection the Spirit He promised will give us the strength and guidance we need.

The Gospel continues to link the importance of family – the Good Shepherd cares for His own because they are 'His' ... they belong with Him. The hired man does not have the same links, the same commitment and when put to the test he lets them down.

I don't know if you saw **Country File** last week – a young teenage girl caring for her sheep ... she had an awareness of their needs, a real bond with them, leading her group of orphan lambs to be fed, lambing ewes and feeding, checking, loving them before and after school: **“Not a problem”** she said **“I love my sheep ... of course I do it!”**

That is the shepherd Jesus talks about – who puts his flock first, himself (or herself) last.

But then Jesus talks of **the others**, the ones who are not in the same group and yet need to be brought in, need to be welcomed. Here we have that reminder that we too should be welcoming, that we are not an exclusive gathering or club, but a body of those who share faith in Christ. Jesus demonstrated in His work that spreading God's love was to anyone and everyone. He made no distinction. In Him anyone who turns to God can be a child of God. The divisions are all man-made and it is our task to work towards being that one flock, with one Shepherd. Amen.