

ST PAUL'S CHURCH (RONDEBOSCH)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

SUNDAY: 3 MAY 2020

READINGS: ACTS 2:42-47/ PSALM 23// 1PETER 2:19-25//

JOHN 10: 1:10

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*Lord open our ears that we may hear you Open our eyes that we may see you
and open our hearts that we may accept you*

Good morning St Paul's family, today is Lockdown day 38. I know the Lockdown is necessary and important to lessen the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, but I have to admit I miss you and I miss celebrating the Eucharist with you.

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Easter and it is called Good Shepherd Sunday, and our readings for today employ the metaphor of God as a Shepherd and the people as sheep following the shepherd, recognizing and listening to the shepherd's voice.

Let me start my sermon with a story

"Two men were called on, in a large classroom, to recite Psalm 23. One was a published orator trained in speech technique and drama. He repeated the psalm in a powerful way. When he finished, the audience cheered and gave him a standing ovation and even asked for an encore (oncore) that they might hear his wonderful voice again. "Then the other man, who was much older, repeated the same words--'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want...' But when he finished, no sound came from the large class. Instead, people sat in a deep mood of devotion and prayer.

"Then the first man, the orator stood up and said. "I have a confession to make,' 'the difference between what you have just heard from my old friend, and what you heard from me is this: I know the Psalm, my friend knows the Shepherd."

I want us to reflect on the following questions, "*Do I really know the Shepherd?*" *Do I hear and recognize the Shepherd's voice during this time of the COVID 19 pandemic?*

I know for us 21 century people the image of a shepherd and sheep is so far removed from our world and I even dare to say some of us have never even seen a sheep let alone a shepherd in real.

When Jesus spoke of shepherds and sheep he was speaking to people who had everyday experiences with lambs, sheep, goats, kids.

But let us turn to our Scripture readings and observe a couple of interesting things about the shepherd with whom Jesus identifies himself and how it also concerns and relates to us too.

In V 3 we read “*He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out*”

Isn't it nice when someone knows your name or sends you a personal note? We all appreciate it when someone recognizes us personally.

The words “*His own*” reflects the personal nature of the relationship between shepherd and sheep. Jesus does this with his sheep Jesus knows you by name. More than that, He not only knows your name, but He also knows everything about you, yet He still loves you and wants to fellowship with you! He is your caring shepherd.

Do you know the shepherd that know everything about you?

In v 4 we read “*When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice*”

Note, too, that the shepherd doesn't drive His sheep from behind. He leads them by going ahead of them. He makes sure that the way is safe from predators. He goes ahead of them to make the pathway, to clear the danger, to find the water, the pasture, the provision. This is a security, protection, provision, we also read this in Psalm 23

Jesus does the same. He never takes us where He has not gone Himself, including the valley of the shadow of death. He has been tempted in all the ways we are tempted, yet He was without sin ([Heb. 4:15](#)).

At night the shepherd will lead the sheep back to the pen (sheepfold) They would enter one at a time and the shepherd would stop each sheep with his rod and check each one out for wounds, or some other thing that might be of disturbance or concern to him.

My dear friends this is how protective Jesus is over us his sheep. He will not allow anything bad to happen to his sheep.

With such a caring, personal Saviour who always has our best interests at heart, we can submit to and follow Him, trusting Him even in life's most difficult trials.

Do you know the shepherd that leads and protect you?

Today the world experience the COVID 19 pandemic.

The number of confirmed Corona Virus cases worldwide are 3, 3 million and the number of deaths are 235 000. In South Africa there are 5951 confirmed cases and 116 (1 May) deaths reported. Added to that is the social, economic, emotional, mental and spiritual effects of Corona Virus on people's lives.

There are millions of people in South Africa that live in poverty and are hungry right now. Many companies have closed during this lockdown and thousands of people are unemployed. Many women and children are suffering domestic violence and abuse, during this time

Maybe you are thinking this morning if Jesus is the good Shepherd and knows his sheep by name and knows everything about them. If Jesus the Good shepherd is so protective over his sheep and will not allow anything bad to happen to them. Why do we suffer and experience such devastating effects of the Corona Virus.

My Dear friends it is because we do not listen to the voice of the Good shepherd

In John v 3-4 we read and the sheep listen to his voice and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

My dear friends sometimes our Shepherd talks to us but we don't hear him. We don't listen and recognize his voice. We rather hear and listen to the voices of the world around us. And this is happening in the world today. The world tells us money and material possession will earn us respect and recognition and therefore we work hard and long hours to accumulate more and more.. And in the process family life is broken, Pollution increased and our environment are being threatened as businesses and companies grow.

So yes even though the Corona Virus pandemic has disastrous consequences it can also have a positive impact on our behaviour, mind-set and even our spiritual life.

We can use this time during Lockdown, to reflect and spend time with our Shepherd and listen to his voice.

Furthermore In v 7-10 we read *“Therefore Jesus said I am the gate whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pastures. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life and have it to the full”*

If we recognize and listen to his voice and follow him. He promises

1. ***Life in full:*** he promise us if we believe in Jesus as our Saviour, If we become members of his flock, all the littleness of earthly life would be gone and we would know the splendour and the magnificence of the life of God

A life that is secure: Nothing could snatch us away from his hand. This would not mean that we would be saved from sorrow, from suffering, from death but that in the saddest moment and in our darkest hour we would be conscience of the everlasting arms underneath and around us. Even in a world crashing to disaster like now with the **Corona Virus Pandemic** we would know the serenity of God.

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CONCLUSION

It is the LORD, the Good Shepherd, and Jesus Himself. He is with us, that we need not fear. His rod and staff will comfort and protect us

Jesus the shepherd wants us to surrender to him, and follow his voice during this time of the COVID 19 pandemic. If only we will hear his voice amiss the other sounds of this world If only we will focus in on that voice and tune out all the other negative voices. -----We will find peace and hope during this trouble time

My dear friends do you know the shepherd? Do you know and recognize his voice during this time of the Corona virus pandemic