



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on October 16th 2022 at 10:45, meeting at Bethesda Chapel.

Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our service today is being led by Alec, and our theme today is *The Good Shepherd*.

Alec welcomes us: "Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church on this sunny but rather cold morning." We begin by listening (and watching) a video at Bethesda of a familiar hymn, sung to a possibly unfamiliar tune. Alec hopes our hearts will rejoice as we see the lovely pictures that accompany the song.

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want,
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside the still waters;
He restoreth my soul
and guides my path in righteousness for His name's sake.

Surely goodness and loving kindness
shall follow me all the days of my life
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever and ever and ever.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I will not fear, thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table
before me in the presence of my enemies,
thou anointest my head with oil, my cup's overflowing.

Surely goodness and loving kindness....

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.

Authors: Francis Rous Keith Green, Melody Green CCLI SONG # 180857

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Alec leads us in prayer: "Our loving father we thank you that we have come together this morning in this place, that we have the freedom to gather in this country to worship you, to praise your name, to adore you together; to pray to you, to speak with you, to listen to you, you reflect on your word, to hear what you are saying

to us through the word of God, your word to us. Thank you that we have come from many different places, from several different countries, some of us here for the first time, we thank you that in you we are bound together through your love, through the love of the shepherd, the good shepherd who gave his life that we might live. So we praise you and worship you and ask that you will lead us and guide us. Bless us and encourage us, bind us together we pray in Jesus name. Amen"

We are encouraged to lift our voices in song as Tim plays:

I cannot tell why he, whom angels worship,
should set his love upon the sons of men,
or why, as Shepherd, he should seek the wanderers,
to bring them back, they know not how or when.
But this I know, that he was born of Mary,
when Bethlehem's manger was his only home,
and that he lived at Nazareth and laboured,
and so the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is come.

I cannot tell how silently he suffered,
as with his peace he graced this place of tears,
or how his heart upon the cross was broken,
the crown of pain to three and thirty years.
But this I know, he heals the broken-hearted,
and stays our sin, and calms our lurking fear,
and lifts the burden from the heavy laden,
for yet the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is here.

I cannot tell how he will win the nations,
how he will claim his earthly heritage,
how satisfy the needs and aspirations
of east and west, of sinner and of sage.
But this I know, all flesh shall see his glory,
and he shall reap the harvest he has sown,
and some glad day his sun shall shine in splendour
when he the saviour, Saviour of the world, is known.

I cannot tell how all the lands shall worship,
when, at his bidding, every storm is stilled,
or who can say how great the jubilation
when all the hearts of men with love are filled.
But this I know, the skies will thrill with rapture,
and myriad, myriad human voices sing,
and Earth to Heaven, and Heaven to Earth, will answer:
At last the Saviour, Saviour of the world, is King!

Author: W Y Fullerton CCLI SONG # 2728564 Public domain. CCL No 5664

Our Prayers are led by Becky, who shares with us that her loved neighbour, Jim, who has been in sheltered accommodation, has gone to be with Jesus this morning, and asks that we remember Lily especially today.

"Beautiful Heavenly Father in heaven,

Thank you that you are the light of the world, guiding our steps on your good path. Lead us your people to be faithful to you, help us to be encouraged and changed for the better. Help us to be protected from temptation and complacency. We want to be people filled with joy. We want to sing your praises together, and when we pray, we want to pray with confidence that you will fill us with your Holy Spirit. We are your children gathered together to worship, serve and love you and each other.

May we work together as members of one body and use wisely the gifts and attributes you have given to us, to faithfully love and serve one another and you, our most precious Saviour. You know our every need, let us remember that. Fill us with the knowledge of your love. Gracious and compassionate, slow to anger. Give us boldness to each others, you are able to do more than we ask or expect.

Bless our church. When we are together, precious Father, you are in the midst of us. Strengthen our church Lord, let people listen and respond to you. Show us what we need to do, how to act to be attractive to our brothers and sisters. Please guide our tongues and our experiences of your greatness, to those who have not come to know you yet, as we know you. Help us to show friendship and compassion as you do Lord Father. Show us the way to be your hands and feet and ears and eyes. Give us the confidence to talk about you and tell people of your promises to us, that we are never alone. Your promises are always faithful and we need never to be afraid. But we can always trust you and depend on you.

We pray this morning Lord God for all nations to live in harmony. Please Lord, heal suffering and sorrow for all mankind. Give wisdom to our political leaders, help them to make the right decisions, give them courage and perseverance. We pray for the children who are unloved and unwanted. We ask you to let your love become known to those of us who are not aware of you at this time. Children who are abused and frightened, young people who rely on drugs, who are hungry and angry all the time. Children have other lands who are recruited for war, taught to fight and hate.

We pray this morning for the world in general Heavenly Father. We pray for all the countries where there is unrest. Countries where there is a shortage of food and water, where sanitation is barely existent and hospital treatment also. We are so grateful for the aid workers and for the charities who assist these countries. We pray your blessings on the Chilvers and they work they do. We pray for our hospices and air ambulance and all the NHS staff.

We ask for wisdom and better understanding for our government. We worry for the safety of the our young people as there is so much violence in our world today. We pray about the situation with guns and knives. Hardly a day passes but someone is getting stabbed or shot at. Lord we ask you to intervene in all this danger, for stricter tighter rules and licenses for these weapons. Lord you created this beautiful world for us all to live in peace together, but sadly it is a pretty scary place right

now. Please Father God change peoples hearts, let them come to know you and your love for us all.

You died on the cross for us Heavenly Father to give us eternal life, how sad these terrible things going on in our world right now must make you. Father we pray so hard for these things to change, for all this racism and hooliganism and greed to stop. For us all to live in peace with one another. Please Lord turn the hearts of these people around, we know you can. We try to help the homeless and the neglected, the lonely and the abused, but we are completely out of our depth with all these acts of sheer cruelty. So we pray to you Father God to intervene.

As I draw my prayers to a close, dear Lord, I ask your blessing on our church here at Bethesda, on Alec our Pastor and on our deacons and church leaders. They all work so hard for us as well as having jobs and families to look after. We pray you will give them wisdom and good health. We ask you place your healing hand on all who are unwell or caring for family members who are unwell at this time in our congregation. We don't need to name them, you know each and every situation, the end from the beginning. Please let them draw comfort from the knowledge of your love for them. We thank you for those people we know who are recovering. We pray these prayers in Jesus name. Amen"

Today's Reading by Graham is John 10, 1-18

"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. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

"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.”

Alec introduces our Offering hymn: Souls of men why will ye scatter;

Souls of men! why will ye scatter like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts! why will ye wander from a love so true and deep?
Was there ever kindest shepherd half so gentle, half so sweet,
as the Saviour who would have us come and gather round his feet?

There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner, and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Saviour; here is healing in his blood.

But we make his love too narrow by false limits of our own;
and we lose the tender shepherd in the judge upon the throne.
For the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind;
and the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind.

Author: Frederick William Faber CCLI SONG # 3101551 Copyrights: Public Domain CCL No 5664

We sang slightly different words at Bethesda, to the tune to which we usually sing
Come thou long expected Jesus, played by Tim (so we sang 6 short verses)

Restless souls why will do you scatter like a flock of frightened sheep?
Doubting hearts! why do you wander from a love so true and deep?

There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice which is more than liberty.

There is no place where earth's sorrows are more keenly felt than heaven,
There is no place where earth's failing have such glorious judgement given,

There is plentiful redemption through the blood that Christ has shed,
There is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the head.

For the love of God is broader than the measure of our mind,
and the heart of the eternal is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more simple we should take him at his word,
And our lives would find fulfilment in the goodness of the Lord.

After praying: "Loving heavenly father, thank you for all the good gifts you give to us. Especially once again we thank you today for the gift of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our good Shepherd, who came into the world to give his life for us, that we might become his sheep, to know life in him. Thank you for your resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, thank you that we live in you and as just a small token of our thanks we give you these gifts and ask you to bless them for the sake of your kingdom, in Jesus name. Amen."

- Alec shared his Message: The Good Shepherd

I remember introducing myself to a small church in Pasay City in Metro-Manila in the Philippines in a building with a roof, walls and chairs. I went to the front, turned round to speak and was rather surprised to see chickens walking around at the back of the church meeting room. After that I did not find it strange to have animals wandering around in churches when that happened. But it hasn't happened here yet.

Coming to church this morning I didn't meet any shepherds and didn't see any sheep. The nearest sheep to me are the ones on the road between Mellor and Ramsgreave. But of course we all know what sheep look like and even if we have never met nor had a personal conversation with a shepherd we probably have some kind of idea of what it is like to be a real one.

The shepherd is a very prominent, extremely meaningful metaphor in the Bible isn't it. Right at the beginning in Genesis 49:24 the Lord is referred to as a shepherd; and in Isaiah 40:11 "He tends His flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in His arms and carries them close to His heart; He gently leads those that have young"; and in Psalm 23 we read the Lord is our Shepherd and He protects His flock from evil.

But why is God's flock compared with sheep and not with goats, cows, chickens, or horses? Sheep are in need of leadership. Without it, they wander off and are injured or killed. Isaiah explains that we "all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to our own way" (Isaiah 53:6). This was just as true in his time, 700 years before Jesus was born, as it is now. It takes special qualities to be a shepherd of sheep and of people. In ancient Israel, God often appointed those who demonstrated skill and wisdom in their leadership of and care for their sheep with the privilege of leading God's people.

So many great Jewish leaders about whom we read in the Old Testament were shepherds.

God handpicked shepherds with a proven record of trustworthiness in caring for their sheep to be the patriarchs and first leaders of His people Israel, most notably Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and David.

Shepherds have a great deal of practice managing large groups of living creatures.

They have a lot of time to think and to reflect as they watch over their animals.

One of the great lessons that we may all learn from Jewish history is the difficulty and the challenges of unifying and trying to lead the most individualistic nation on earth. For this daunting task, being a shepherd is good practice.

Although Moses was a prince of Egypt, and very likely well-versed in the principles of Egyptian leadership, God prepared him for the task of leading the Israelites through a 40-year role as a shepherd.

It was likely very humbling, and humility is an important quality of a great leader.

In the book of the prophet Micah we read, "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what

does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (6:8)

David was also a shepherd called to lead Israel.

David, who risked his life to protect his sheep from predators such as lions and bears, provides insight into the characteristics of a good shepherd in Psalm 23.

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul." (1–3a)

David's solitude as a shepherd helped him to understand deeply that God was his shepherd. He understood that he was His sheep. It is a moving metaphor.

Like sheep, we are totally dependent on our Shepherd to provide for us. The Shepherd takes care of our needs. When we enter the flock of the Good Shepherd, His Word feeds our souls; His Spirit quenches our thirst. He shows us things that even the prophets and angels longed to know, (1 Peter 1:10–12).

"He guides me along the right paths for His Name's sake." (v. 3b)

Are we sometimes restless? Maybe we are restless in the day time or restless at night or both? David perhaps realises his own restlessness, and as He turns to God trusting Him with his life, he rests being sure of God's faithfulness. As a shepherd himself he knows what it means to say the Lord is my shepherd.

Shepherds would normally create a sheepfold at night or an enclosure topped by thorns to keep the sheep in and predators out. They would sleep across the entrance so that they themselves were the door to the fold, effectively barring the entrance so predators could not creep up on the sheep as they slept.

When sheep do wander into dangerous circumstances, getting caught in a thicket, floating down a river, passing near a predator, the Shepherd uses his tools—the rod and the staff—to defend, rescue and bring his sheep back into his protection.

People likewise find themselves in perilous circumstances they never imagined or are unprepared for. God never abandons us to face those challenges alone.

The rod, often considered a disciplinary tool, is in reality a weapon used to defend sheep by warding off predators. The staff is used to hook a sheep's neck or leg to redirect, to hold, or to nudge them—not to hurt them, but rather to keep them safe.

A popular myth would have us believe that shepherds in ancient Israel broke the leg of a sheep who wanders. While the leg is healing, it is said that the sheep would become endeared to the shepherd as he nurtures them back to health, carrying the disabled sheep close to his heart.

In reality, it is highly impractical and counterproductive to break a sheep's leg. They can weigh up to 75 pounds, so carrying even one disabled sheep would handicap a shepherd, preventing him from caring for his other sheep for several weeks.

Imagine if a shepherd were caring for multiple sheep in this condition!

Moreover, the sheep's leg might not heal properly which would permanently handicap it from responding to predators. And, in the end, the sheep might associate the rod and staff with punishment, not comfort and protection, making a shepherd's job much more difficult.

Isaiah (40:11) sums up shepherding duties when he says a good shepherd "gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young."

Jesus came in fulfilment of God's promise to send a good Shepherd to Israel.

In the period in which He was born, the shopkeeper and doctor had been raised up in social status while the religious leaders despised and mistrusted shepherds, officially condemning them as “sinners.”

But you see Jesus did not come to exalt Himself in the eyes of the religious establishment. He fully understood His role as the Good Shepherd, coming humbly to “seek and save the lost” — His sheep (Luke 19:10).

He explained it this way: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders.” (Luke 15:4–7)

Immediately after the Kansai earthquake and tsunami in western Japan in 1995 one of my Japanese colleagues spent 7 days going round his parish trying to find the believers from his church before he went home even once. When he arrived home he could not get in because of the damage caused to the entrance of the building by the earthquake.

Sometimes, it is necessary for a shepherd to catch an individual sheep. The easiest way to catch a sheep is to cup your hand around the bony part of its jaw. Put your other hand on its neck. Keep its head up to control it. If a sheep gets its head down, it is difficult to control. If the sheep is further away, you can grab it by its hind leg, just above the hock. For larger sheep, it is better to grab the rear flank, as close to the body as possible. When catching sheep this way, you need to work your hand up to the head as quickly as possible to gain control of the sheep. A shepherd's crook will give you a longer reach. There are two types of crooks that can be used to catch sheep: the traditional neck crook and a leg crook. The neck crook is used to catch the sheep by the neck. After you loop the neck, you need to turn your wrist to keep the sheep from getting away. The leg crook is ideal for pasture situations. You can use it to snag a front or hind leg, depending on which way the sheep is facing. Once caught, you need to work your hand up the crook to secure the sheep. Some crooks have dual ends, so you can catch sheep by their neck or feet. You can also use the crook to block sheep and steer them in the direction you want. You should never catch a sheep by the wool or skin, as this can bruise the muscle and damage the carcass.

Finding and restoring wandering sheep is not an easy task.

Let’s look at John 10 to what Jesus Himself said. As Graham read for us, Jesus says I am the good shepherd and the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. Now for a Palestinian shepherd to die in the course of carrying out his pastoral responsibilities must have been a very rare event indeed. A Palestinian shepherd normally planned not to die for his sheep but to stay alive for them as long as possible. If a Palestinian shepherd died carrying out his responsibilities it would be a very sad accident and it would be a disaster for the sheep. But for Jesus the main thing he aims to do, his prime goal on which he sets his eyes, the event of which he speaks about almost immediately is that he is going to die for the sheep. In verse 11 he says the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep; and in verse 17 he says the reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And you see Jesus’ death does not take place because of some kind of accident; it does not result from misadventure; it occurs because Jesus takes his authority, because Jesus claims and uses the power he has and lays down his life. The death and resurrection of the good shepherd means forgiveness and life to the sheep, who now belong to Jesus.

Jesus cares for you and I so much that he came into the world and gave his life for us. Have we come to him asking for his forgiveness for going our own way? If so we are one of His sheep; and then not only did he die for us but he knows who we are. We are not being watched by big

brother but we are being looked after by the good shepherd. He says, "I am the good shepherd: I know my sheep and my sheep know me."

Jesus knows of our broken relationships, broken friendships, and broken hearts. He knows of our ill-health and our frustrations. He knows of our disappointments. Do you understand just how well he knows us? He says, "I know my sheep and my sheep know me-just as the Father knows me and I know the Father." To the same level, in the same degree, to the same extent that God the Father knows the Son, Jesus, the Son of God knows us. That is truly awesome; that is simply amazing. This is an unbelievably intimate relationship for the Shepherd knows His sheep individually, and they recognise His voice and respond to Him. He knows you.

Let`s look again at verse 16: Jesus says: "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." If we took time this morning we could look at Jesus` prayer to His Father in John 17, a treasure of spiritual truth.

Jesus unites the sheep. And Jesus has other sheep whom he says are not of this sheep pen. Jesus is not just there for the Jews. He has other sheep who although they belong to him have not yet been brought to him. Jesus says, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away." And in another place Jesus says: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest."

I believe with all my heart that God called this church to Galligreaves and Wensleyfold not just to sit comfortably in a nice warm room under a safe roof with or without chickens. It is really good and we thank God that we still have the freedom to meet here together, the freedom to encourage other churches like New Life International Church that has celebrated its fourteenth anniversary right here this weekend, the freedom to encourage other churches in their ministry here and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ all together. We are three churches meeting in this building. But in all humility for the sake of the Name, the honour and glory of Christ we are not going to allow ourselves to follow those who maybe try to by-pass the gate and create an alternative gospel which is no true gospel. Our gospel, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, is a gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation with the living God and with one another. May the good shepherd, the great shepherd of the sheep, mercifully enable us to be reconciled to him and to one another. We do not want to have a form of godliness but at one and the same time deny its power.

The response that the good shepherd received from the Jews was perhaps not what we would expect. There were those who thought he was demon-possessed and raving mad, there were those who picked up stones to stone him for blasphemy for saying he was God`s Son and those who tried to arrest him.

Jesus did not speak often in self-defence but he replied saying he had shown them many great miracles from the Father and asked them for which of those miracles they were stoning him. But you see their real challenge was to the Godhead of Jesus; and that is exactly the place where we are here today in this town. So I say clearly once again Jesus Christ is the only Son of God.

But there were others who realised that what the good shepherd was saying were not the words of a man possessed or oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind they said? In verse 42 we read that many people believed in him then and there.

When the Son of Man comes in His glory, that is to say when Jesus the only Son of God comes again, and all the angels with him, he will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

It is not everybody that can divide sheep from goats. I suppose according to our normal judgment of goats you would very easily tell them from sheep; but someone who has travelled in the East, and even in southern Italy, knows that it takes a somewhat trained eye to know a certain kind of goat from a certain kind of sheep. They are extremely like each other: the wool of some sheep in a warm climate becomes so like hair, and the hair of a kind of goat is so much like wool, that a tourist or an irregular observer scarcely knows which is which; but a shepherd who has lived among them knows the difference well.

We are either disciples of Jesus or we are not. We are either followers of Jesus or we are not.

Jesus says whoever enters through me will be saved; he will go in and out and find pasture. I know my sheep the Saviour says and all my sheep know me. Amen.

Alec invites us to pray for a minute, quietly, then continues:

Thank you, Father, that you came into the world in Jesus Christ, that your son gave his life for us, that he showed what it is to be a good Shepherd. Thank you that you live in us, and strengthen us, comfort us, help us, meet all our needs. Because we have given our lives to you, we know that you are helping us, we are your sheep. We pray that many others that you have already prepared to come into your kingdom, maybe those too that are living in this area around this church building just here, that many others will come into this fellowship knowing the freedom that you give, knowing the life that you give, knowing that you know that you can be trusted and that you care. We pray in Jesus name. Amen

**We are able to share in a time of Open prayer and worship including:
The King of love my shepherd is, which Tim plays for us:**

The King of love my Shepherd is, whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his and he is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow my ransomed soul he leadeth,
and where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed, but yet in love he sought me,
and on his shoulder gently laid, and home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still, thy cross before to guide me.

Thou spread'st a table in my sight; thy unction, grace bestoweth;
and O what transport of delight from thy pure chalice floweth!

And so through all the length of days thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise within thy house for ever.

We are invited to pray aloud or quietly before singing again the version of The Lord is my shepherd played at the start of the service: but if you wish to sing or say the more familiar words to a tune you know these are they.

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
in pastures green; He leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

My soul He doth restore again;
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
even for His own Name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for Thou art with me; and Thy rod
and staff my comfort still.

My table Thou hast furnishèd
in presence of my foes;
my head Thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me;
and in God's house forevermore
my dwelling place shall be.

We bring our service to a close as we join together as we say:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.