

A Service for the week of Easter 4, the week before May 3rd.

This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield and Royal Freemason's in Sale but with the intention of being available for use in other retirement villages and nursing homes. It may be also distributed to any who are interested for their private use.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we remember Jesus as the good shepherd and his love and care for us, His sheep.

HYMN No. 3 - Fill thou my life O Lord my God, in every part with praise.

You can read the words to yourself, or out loud. If you remember the tune well enough you can sing it yourself. You can, of course sing just the first, or the first and last verses.

SOME VERSES FROM I PETER 2 : 20 to 24

If you are punished for doing wrong, then it is deserved. If you suffer for doing good then you are commended to God. Jesus suffered and bore our sins. By His wounds we have been made whole. We were like sheep going astray, but now we have returned to the good shepherd

PRAYER

Thank you God, for sending Jesus for us. Help us to follow His leading closely and not go astray. May we always try to live by His example and forgive us we ask, for those times when we fail. Thank you that through Jesus life and death, our sins are taken from us and we are completely forgiven. The past no longer has power over us. Help us to take this to heart, through faith, relying not on the mere works of our lives, but on your great work of forgiveness for us. We thank you and praise you O God, Amen.

Additional READING if you wish - Psalm 23, the shepherds psalm

HYMN No. 27 - I am so glad that Jesus loves me

BIBLE READING

The Gospel reading for this week is John 10 : 1 to 10 Here is a shortened version:

Jesus said : I am the good shepherd. The sheep know their shepherd and the shepherd knows his sheep. They know his voice, he calls them by name and they follow him but they will run away from a stranger. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, to protect them.

REFLECTION

I don't suppose many of you have known shepherds. There have not been many in Australia since the 1850s, but there have been small herds of dairy cows up until the 1950s when there was still some

hand milking. Back in the days before milking machines, herds of cows were often small. The farmers in those days knew all their cows. They knew which one would be first into milking, which cows would follow which other cows, which ones were calm and easy-going, and which ones gave trouble. They could tell when a particular cow was out of sorts.

The good shepherd that Jesus told his followers about was like those good dairy farmers in the hand milking days. The farmers that really cared for their animals and would go out in any sort of bad weather to make sure they were all right. The farmers who would talk soothingly to their animals to calm them if they were upset.

This parable of Jesus shows that we can rely on Him. He ensures necessities, safety and protection. We can live in the calm assurance that everything we need is in His care. Jesus has, in fact, laid down His life for our spiritual well-being. We can be assured that He will lead us the right way, we only have to follow. What a wonderful parable, what a wonderful message, what a wonderful way to live.

HYMN No.12 - The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want.

PRAYER

God our Father, we thank you for your love and care towards us. We pray too for those that we care for, keep our family and friends safe and well, we pray. We pray also for the wider world, especially for those living in poor countries where living conditions are crowded. We pray for health workers, those who help us, those who work in ambulances, clinics and hospitals, and those in medical research. May we be patient and understanding at this time when routines and regular activities are upset, and help us, in our own time and place, to follow you as closely as we are able. This, we ask through Jesus Christ our shepherd and Lord.

And we pray together, THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. 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 No 18 - When we walk with the Lord - trust and obey

THE BLESSING

May the Jesus Christ, the good shepherd comfort you, guide you and protect you.

And may the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be upon you and remain with you always, Amen