

**An Address for St David's and St Michael's, Exeter, by Howard Friend –
May 3rd 2020 – Easter 4**

Psalm 23 & John 10 vs 1-10

May I speak in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – Amen

Jesus said, in the middle of this discourse on Sheep and himself as the Good Shepherd – ‘I have come that they might have Life, and have it more Abundantly.

The problem is – right now, there doesn't seem to be a lot of it about does there? – not much opportunity for this Abundant Life.

I wonder what you're missing most:

Having friends around for a meal and greeting them with a hug, or if you don't do hugs – at least a handshake.

Going out for a drink in a comfortably full and buzzing Pub

Singing in your choir. Going to Church, the Theatre, the Cricket, Rugby, Football – whatever. It all seems like a very long time ago, a distant memory since we DID any of those things, those activities.

Therein lies the dilemma for many of us, in this Lockdown, we can't DO stuff and for many of us – that defines us. Our Abundant Life is DOING. And simply BEING just doesn't hack it. Actually I suggest it's even more problematic than that. Many of us look into our inner selves and conclude that we don't like what we see - or wonder if there's anything there at all.

How then to be comfortable, how to find meaning in just BEING and not in running around DOING. That is the question – to be - - - - no I'm not going to say it, even though we've just celebrated his birthday.

The Christian answer to this existential dilemma is to remind ourselves that The Good Shepherd gave his life for the Sheep - that's you and me. Why did he do it – because he loves us – This is the Easter Good News.

Confidence in just BEING starts with being still (and there's plenty of opportunity for that for most of us, at the moment,) - being still - and meditating on this wonderful truth. When everything else is stripped away - God loves me – not for what I've done - but just as I am, he loves me.

Coming back to sheep for a moment:

David the Psalmist, knew this truth and expressed it memorably in the 23rd Psalm, today's Psalm.

This isn't the one, written in the cave of Adullam, when he was hiding from King Saul. (That's 142), but from one of his other Lockdown moments, and he had quite few. His boyhood experience gives expression to the certainty of his relationship with God, that he is loved by God, no matter what.

It's worth enjoying again these wonderful words

The Lord IS my Shepherd, I shall not want, he makes me lie down in green pasture, he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul.

Lockdown is an opportunity, a challenge, for us to explore just BEING in his presence - not - I hasten to add 'In green pasture or beside still waters' unless your time there exceeds the journey time to and from. But government guidelines notwithstanding - may I encourage you as I'm trying to do myself, to make space to just BE in his presence and allow him to 'Restore our Souls'.

The time for action will come again - in the meantime let's properly explore 'The Abundant Life' of just BEING in his presence. Let's be honest - this doesn't come easily to all of us. Certainly not to me. I am much more a do-er than a be-er. But I'm learning. Recently I have started meditating on the Psalms, and actually have spent quite a lot of time on the 23rd, which has become even more precious to me. It's made me think back over my own farming background. That's the reason you got it instead of one the standard readings by the way.

Abundant Life – What are we missing by not Doing?

Abundant Life - What are we missing by not just Being?

I close with a prayer that Belinda Speed-Andrews introduced us to last week. It has the great qualities of truth and brevity.

Let us pray:

Be Silent

Be Still

Let your Lord God love you.

Amen