

Scriptures Acts 4:5-12; Ps 23; 1John 3:16-24; John 10:11-18

Key Text: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need" Ps 23:1 GNB

ANZAC arouses a great deal of emotion: the recall of loved ones or fellow citizens who gave their lives, or came home tormented for decades to come, of those presently deployed and their loved ones. And others, like Kate Aubusson, writing in the SMH of the, quote "Sacred Anzac myth as a challenge for my generation"¹. In reality after 25th April 1915 every town and community including the indigenous communities of our 14 yr old nation, was grieving the loss of some 8000 diggers to that fateful Gallipoli landing, and before armistice, a further 46000 Australians who died in France and Belgium.

Regardless of the merits of those campaigns, those who enlisted did so sincerely, enlisting for God, King and country.

Jesus words from John 15:13 are often read, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends." GNB

Selflessness strikes a chord. Like the neighbours who risked their lives to save the elderly gentleman clinging to a tree, after floodwater engulfed his home at Dungog. Service personnel, emergency services, peace-keepers, mates, police and others, who over & over, risk their lives in the line of duty.

David, the OT Shepherd boy who became king used his bare hands against the lion and bear to save his sheep². In the Judean hills where robbers, wild

¹ Kate Aubusson: Sydney Morning Herald 18-19March 2015

² 1 Sam 13:37

animals and bad weather often lurked, the shepherd used his rod and staff to keep his sheep, loved like his children, safe from harm.

As a child, at lambing time my Dad would bring poddy lambs whose mothers had died giving birth, into the kitchen to be warmed, fed and then nurtured 'til they were old enough to go back to the flock.

In '51 a terrible fire engulfed our farm. My grandfather rushed to one paddock calling "Poddy Poddy Poddy". The poddy, now returned to the flock came to safety, and hundreds of others, following, came too.

The scriptures describe Jesus as the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep, (us), by name. His sheep follow their shepherd's voice, a voice that calls us to safety, to receive mercy, to restoration, to goodness, and assurance in the face of death, anointing with grace and love toward others, and feasting as princes and princesses in the home of God for ever.

This Shepherd metaphor describes the role Jesus fills in the lives of his sheep, in you and me. Sheep can graze totally unaware of an eagle circling above, of imminent weather events or dangers. It is especially at those times that the Shepherd is so vital for their survival.

With the weather events of the past week, constant talk of terrorist attacks, workplace accidents and possible unexpected turns for the worse in our lives, it can be wonderful to be a "sheep" with a "Good Shepherd"!

At the end of today's reading from Acts 4:5-12, Luke calls this Good Shepherd the Saviour. "This Jesus has become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no-one else." On TV many saw that North Narrabeen house topple. Take out the foundation and a building is in trouble. Likewise, anyone is in imminent peril, without the Saviour.

Many "diggers" called out to the Saviour. Alan Broadrib from Southern NSW

enlisted with the 7th Field Company Engineers in Sept 1915 as a horse handler and served in the trenches on the Western Front. His father had given him a NT as he boarded the ship. When he died in Victoria in 1961, his New Testament was at his side and in it the prayer he wrote, “O God protect me, and protect my horses, in the name of Him who was born in a stable.”³

Apart from honouring the fallen and all who serve, to me, ANZAC Day rekindles appreciation of how blessed we are as a nation, our heritage and our future. Likewise, the Good Shepherd on this 4th Sunday after Easter reminds of how blessed we are to have received the Good News of Jesus, who laid down his life for us all despite our failings. He dealt with the sins of all⁴, casts out all fear and assures a certain future to all who would receive and trust Him.

Like talk of an ANZAC “myth”, some similarly relegate to myth, the Good Shepherd stories; Jesus laying his life down for the sheep, rising up victorious over sin and death, offering forgiveness and life, life to be shared with all who will believe and receive Him. What say you? Can you say ...
“The Lord is my Shepherd?”

Or is it just nice poetry? Jesus invites us all, to hear his voice and follow him, today, to own Him as King, to serve Him as Lord in love and joy, and in doing so draw others into His one flock, the love and peace of His eternal presence.

19thC Herefordshire Vicar, Sir Henry Baker’s hymn “The King of Love”, is based on Ps 23. In V.5 he talks of God’s unction bestowing grace. “Unction” - a word for anointing. May God incline us to be open to the Good

³ Bible Society <http://www.theirsacrifice.com/home> “The Driver and His Horses”

⁴ Colossians 2:13,14

Shepherd's anointing today, and every day.

Benediction

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen Heb13:20-21