

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

Over these weeks of Easter, we have been learning—perhaps relearning—how to stand in the shock of resurrection. We have seen that it is not a private idea or a comforting metaphor, but a reality that breaks into the world: a stone rolled away, a body raised, wounds still visible, Christ standing among his disciples in the flesh.

And today, the question shifts again.

If this is true—if Christ is risen in this embodied, world-altering way—then what kind of life does it create? What does resurrection look like when it begins to take shape in a community?

The reading from Acts of the Apostles gives us one of the clearest pictures we have:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers... all who believed were together and had all things in common... they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts.”

It is a beautiful image. But we should not mistake it for something sentimental or easy.

This is what resurrection looks like when it becomes a way of life.

A community gathered—not by accident, not by preference—but because they have heard a voice and followed it. Drawn together by the living presence of the risen Christ, like sheep who recognise the voice of their shepherd and find themselves, perhaps to their own surprise, part of a flock.

A people whose lives are being reshaped—how they pray, how they share, how they relate to one another.

Notice how physical it all is.

Bread is broken. Food is shared. Possessions are held lightly. Needs are met in concrete ways.

The same God who raised the physical body of Jesus is now gathering a people, not scattering them—a flock being drawn into one place, learning to trust the voice that calls them into life.

And then, in the First Epistle of Peter, we are given another image of what this life looks like.

“Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house...”

Living stones.

Not static. Not decorative. Alive.

Each one shaped, placed, held together—not by accident, but by Christ himself, who is named as the cornerstone.

But notice this: stones do not assemble themselves.

They are gathered. Chosen. Positioned.

Just as sheep do not create the flock—the shepherd calls, leads, and holds them together—so too this living house is formed by the one who knows each stone, each life, and draws them into something larger than themselves.

“A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.”

This is who you are, Peter says—not because of what you have achieved, but because you have been called, gathered, and given a place.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people.

Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

This is resurrection language.

It is about being brought from death into life, from isolation into belonging, from scattered fragments into something that holds

together—because the Shepherd has gone out to find, to call, and to bring home.

And then, in the Gospel from John, Jesus gives us the image that holds all of this together.

“I am the gate... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

And just beyond this, though we may know it by heart, he says: *I am the good shepherd.*

Life.

That is the thread that runs through all the readings.

Not survival. Not mere existence. But life—full, abundant, overflowing.

And Jesus is very clear: there are other voices, other powers, that come “only to steal and kill and destroy.”

We do not have to look far to recognise those competing voices.

Voices that scatter rather than gather.

Voices that breed fear rather than trust.

Voices that isolate rather than call into belonging.

We see it in the world around us—in conflict, in injustice, in the quiet erosion of hope.

We see it in the ways communities fracture, in the ways trust is lost.

And we see, too, how easily human systems—even good ones—can begin to sound less like the voice of the shepherd and more like something else: something closed, defensive, anxious.

But against all of that, Jesus stands and says: I am the gate. I am the shepherd. My sheep hear my voice.

He does not drive from behind. He calls from ahead.

He does not coerce. He leads.

He does not abandon the flock to danger. He lays down his life for the sheep.

And perhaps this is where we can gently bring into view the memory of ANZAC Day, which we have just marked.

It is a day shaped by remembrance—of sacrifice, of courage, of lives given in the midst of conflict. It is a day that honours those who stood in the face of forces that threatened to overwhelm.

There is something in that which resonates, carefully, with the Christian story.

Not because war and resurrection are the same—they are not—but because both take seriously the reality of danger, of loss, of forces that destroy.

ANZAC Day does not pretend that all is well. It names the cost when lives are laid down.

And in a very different, deeper way, Jesus speaks of himself as the shepherd who lays down his life—not caught in the machinery of violence, but choosing, freely, to stand between the sheep and all that would destroy them.

The Christian claim goes further still.

It says that in Jesus Christ, God has entered fully into that place of danger, suffering, and death—and has overcome it from within.

Not by avoiding it. Not by denying it. But by passing through it and raising life on the other side.

Which means that when Jesus says, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly,” we are hearing the voice of one who

has gone to the furthest edge for the sake of the flock—and returned, still calling, still leading, still gathering.

And this brings us back to that community in Acts.

Because what we see there is not perfection, but a flock learning to live under the care of the shepherd.

They listen.

They stay close.

They share what they have, because fear no longer governs them.

They recognise one another, not as strangers, but as those who have heard the same voice.

They become, in the words of Peter, “living stones”—yes—but also a people who know themselves to be held, guided, and kept.

And perhaps this is the question that comes to us today.

Not just: Do we believe in the resurrection?

But: Do we recognise the shepherd’s voice?

Are we allowing that voice to shape the way we live together?

Are we becoming a community that reflects the life of the flock—where no one is left wandering, where the vulnerable are noticed, where the gate is not closed out of fear, but held open in trust?

Because the temptation is always to listen to other voices.

To become scattered.

To organise ourselves around anxiety rather than trust.

To make the Church a place of maintenance rather than life.

But the risen Christ is not silent.

He is still speaking.

Still calling.

Still going ahead of us.

Still gathering.

Still building.

Still leading his people into life that cannot be taken away.

Christ is risen.

The wounds are still visible.

The Shepherd still calls.

And the life of God is still taking shape among us—here, now—as we are gathered, known, and led into the strange and wonderful, embodied reality of resurrection life