

## Good Friday All-Age Service

### Game – Where's the sheep

- Get Tim or Tash to hide behind the screen with a toy sheep after the first song
- Matt comes in saying "I've lost my sheep, can you help me find him? Tell me if you see him anywhere"
- When Matt looks away, Tim/Tash makes the sheep pop out from behind the screen, children hopefully point and say "There's the sheep", but when Matt turns around, the sheep has disappeared again.
- This happens two or three times, before Matt finally turns around and the right time and goes to get the sheep (to show distancing, sheep could be thrown to Matt).
- Matt says "You naughty sheep, you went astray! I've been looking for you everywhere, now what have you been up to while I've been away? We're going to go away and talk about it, but while we do, Jon's going to come and read to us from the Bible."

### Part One – "Our iniquities..."

Now, you've been a very naughty sheep haven't you! Me and my sheep have been talking about what he's been up to while he's been astray and it sounds like he's got up to a lot of bad things! What was that? You don't know what 'astray' means? Well astray is what you were! It's when you've gone your own way, all on your own and not listened to me, the shepherd who loves you and cares for you! You've ignored my care and kindness and thought you're better off on your own! That's what astray means! But anyway, I'm glad to have you back now! [put sheep down]

Earlier we talked about animals that we are like [mention examples of what people said]. But the Bible tells us that the animal we are most like is a sheep! That's not because we're all covered in wool and go "baa". No, it's because we are all like my naughty sheep, and we go astray! We're like a flock of naughty sheep, running away from God.

Let's have a look at the verse that Jon read to us again – "We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way". God gave us the right way to live, but we said "No thank you, I want to live my own way!" And this is every single one of us, not just the people we think of as 'bad' or 'naughty'. We all think there are some people who are worse than others, but the Bible says we have all gone astray. We have all turned to our own way. We have all done wrong.

I've got a big book here [hold up big hardback book with the word 'Iniquities' written on the front] – and let's pretend that in this book are all the wrong things we've all done. And there's a big Bible word for these wrong things, and it's the word "Iniquities" it means badness, or sin. See, if you move the last letter of iniquities to the front, you get "sin" and that's what it means. Can you say it with me? One, two, three – iniquities. [Maybe do it again].

Now let me look through this book and see what I can find. Ooh, it says we've cared more about ourselves than other people, I've done that! It says we've been rude, especially to other people in our family, yeah I've done that too. Being greedy. Thinking we're really important. Getting angry with other people. Saying nasty things behind their back. Wanting what other people have. Taking good things from God and not saying thank you. Actually, the older we get, the more iniquities we have. Maybe teenagers and adults you realise this? As we grow up, and spend more time with ourselves, we realise just how sinful we really are.

Kids, grown-ups, this big book is full of our iniquities. And I've been holding this book for quite a while now, and it's very heavy. Our iniquities weigh heavily on all of us. There's no way we can come to God when we're holding this big heavy book! God is a good God, and we are all bad, so what do we do? Well, we need to come to God and say sorry. And when we do, there's some good news, and we're going to hear it later.

But first, let's come to God and say sorry for what we've done wrong. I'm going to lead us in a prayer of confession – that's where we say sorry to God for all our iniquities. And then we're going to listen to Tim & Tash play a song for us and the song says these things "We have been those who have not done right. We have been those who have wandered far". So let's say the confession together, and then let's listen to this song, remembering all our iniquities

### **Part Two – "... are put on Jesus"**

So, we've had the bad news, it's that we are all bad, there are lots of bad things written in this big book of iniquity. But there's some good news too – this is the rest of the verse that Jon read – "We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way, but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

You see that! Our iniquity, this big book, we don't have to carry it anymore! It's laid on someone else. Our iniquities are put on someone else. And it's not because of what we've done. The LORD has done it! We did wrong against God, and He takes our iniquities and puts them on someone else. [put book on table].

It's like this. When I was little, I really hated broccoli, but my Mum and Dad knew it was good for me, and so they made me eat some with my Sunday lunch. And I did not like this, I would start crying and saying "no", and so my parents said "If you don't eat your broccoli, you'll have to go and sit on the naughty step" on the stairs in our house. And I didn't eat my broccoli, and so I had to go and sit on the naughty step.

Now imagine if at that moment, my parents said, "Actually Matt, you don't need to go and sit on the naughty step. Someone else will do it for you." and somebody else took my place! I was naughty, but someone else sat on the naughty step for me! My iniquities are put on someone else.

And this verse says that that has happened with all our iniquities, not just refusing to eat broccoli. Every bad thing we've ever done is put on someone else. This is called "Substitution". It's when someone else stands in for us. It's a swapping place. Like a substitute in a football match! If one player goes off, another one comes on and he or she plays for the team instead. If they score a goal, it counts for the team! This verse tells us that we have a substitute. Someone who comes in instead of us, and carries our iniquities.

So the question is, who is the "him" from the verse? Who is the someone else? And a long time ago there was a man from a country called Ethiopia, and this was a big puzzle for him. And we're going to look at that story now, I've got some friends to come and help me.

*Acts 8:30-35 – [For microphone reasons, Musa will read the story, while it is acted out by others]*

Philip ran up to a chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. "How can I" he said, "Unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. This is the passage of scripture he was reading:

"He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth."

He asked Philip "Tell me please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else? Then Philip began with that very passage of scripture and told him the good news about Jesus."

### **Part 3**

Thank you actors. Those verses this man was reading, it's the same part of the Bible we're reading! The 'him' is Jesus! Our iniquities are put on Jesus!

And actually Jesus did so much more than just play for our football team, or sit on the naughty step instead of us. Because Jesus was crushed, he was pierced, he was punished by God. And it's even more amazing because Jesus had done nothing wrong. But He accepted God's punishment for us.

[Put the cross behind the book] At the cross, all our iniquities were put on Jesus. Let me speak very briefly to kids, teenagers, and adults. Kids – it's quite difficult to understand what iniquities are – it's more than just being naughty. It's something that is deeply wrong with us. But understand this – all our iniquities are put on Jesus. We can be right with God, not because we're good, but because Jesus died.

Teenagers – it's easy to get overly familiar with the cross and with Christianity and think "I know everything there is to know". That's what I thought when I was a teenager. But we can never be 'done' with Jesus, because it's not about knowing stuff in our heads – it's about knowing our iniquities in our hearts, and accepting that they are laid on Him.

And adults – I said earlier the older we get the more aware we are of our iniquities, of how we fall short. Maybe you're here this morning fed up with how you can't change. How you still mess up, getting angry with your family, acting selfishly, pushing God out, not being able to prioritise Him. Well look to the cross. It is finished. Take heart, because *all* of our iniquities are put on Jesus.

And if you're not a Christian here today – how can you turn down this offer? Come to Jesus, let him bear every single thing you've done wrong. The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. All we need to do is say sorry as we did earlier, and allow Him to take our iniquities. There's more to say on that, so if you're not a Christian and you'd like to know more, do get in touch on our website.

So what shall we do? Shall we carry on being bad? No! Look at how serious our iniquities are, this big book of iniquity. Look at how much God loves us, look at how much He loves each one of us. We're going to sing a song later that says "Jesus died to take away our sin" (Sin is another word for iniquity) "So we can get to know our God again. The Lord is good, the Lord is strong". That's all wonderful news, and the next line of the song tells us what we should do – "And we will live our lives for him." Let's live our lives for God, but even when we still do bad things, every day our iniquities are put on Jesus.

Let's look at the cross of Jesus and see how bad we are, let's say sorry to God, but let's be so happy and so thankful that our iniquities are put on Jesus, and live lives of goodness.

I'm going to say a short prayer now, and then Jon is going to come and read the story of Jesus on the cross. Let's remember the wonderful news that our iniquities are put on Him.