

April 25th Worship
4th Sunday in Easter – Good Shepherd Sunday

Introduction to the Day

The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, one of mutual knowledge and love, that gives the shepherd authority. The shepherd's willingness to lay down his life for the sheep shows his love. First John illustrates what it means to lay down our lives for one another by the example of sharing our wealth with any sibling in need.

Thanksgiving For Baptism

In worship we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Baptism for Laredo Lloyd Harnisch

Alleluia! Christ is risen.
Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in
Christ, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ,

for these waters where you make us new,
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.

We bless you, risen Christ,
that your Spirit comes to us
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,
like rains to our thirsting earth,
like streams that revive our souls,
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church
when we hide in fear.
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.
Send us companions on our journey
as we share your life.
Make us one, risen Christ.
Cleanse our hearts.
Shower us with life.
To you be given all praise,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God,
now and forever.
Amen.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Lesson – Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not be in want.

²The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.

³You restore my soul, O LORD,
and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

⁴Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Gospel – John 10:11-18

[Jesus said:] ¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

When we hear these Good Shepherd texts, we almost instinctively put ourselves in the hooves of the sheep.

We find comfort in these passages because we hear of a Shepherd (Jesus) who watches over us. We find comfort in the reassurance that we have a Shepherd (Jesus) who lays down his life for us. We find solace in knowing and hearing that we have a Shepherd (Jesus) who will pull us back into the fold when we go astray. And, we are re-invigorated knowing that the Shepherd (Jesus) will leave the flock to come and find the one that is missing, even when it is us, so that the flock would be one.

It is almost as though we have been trained to hear these texts in that way. And, it is the comfortable way to hear them. BUT. We are often reminded that context is important when hearing a text. There are two ways of looking at context.

The first is to consider where a text falls within the greater biblical narrative. What stories are happening and before and after the text that we hear? What is the larger picture?

The other arena in which to consider the context is the context of the lectionary – the selection of texts that we hear in the church calendar.

In the lectionary context we are in the season of Easter. Jesus has risen from the tomb. He has appeared first to Mary – making himself known by calling her by name. He appears to his disciples giving them the command to forgive. He then makes himself known in his brokenness challenging them to show the hospitality they’ve seen him show throughout their time in his ministry. He has shown them what it will take to continue the mission and ministry that they have been a part of in their time as his followers.

And, in the context of the Gospel texts that we have heard in this Easter Season, Jesus – in giving them the Good Shepherd discourse – gives them a new challenge, and a new meaning of what it will mean to be his followers. And it combines our two understandings of context.

In the church calendar we are nearing the day of the Ascension – when Jesus appears to his disciples in dazzling white and gives them the commandment to go and make disciples – to raise up people in the church – to build up the body of Christ – baptizing and teaching them all that he is about. And this is where we find ourselves as a congregation.

As we worship today – in our worship video – we celebrate faith milestones in the life of a congregation. We began worship with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism for Laredo Lloyd Harnisch. As a congregation promises

were made to look after Laredo and do the work to ensure that he is raised in the church, learning what it means to be a follower of Jesus. And all of you – whether you were able to tune in on Facebook Live, watched our worship video online, or are thinking of those promises as you read this, are reminded of the role that YOU play in the life of the young people of your church – and you are maybe even thinking of the people who were, and have been, there for you on your journey.

Later in worship we will celebrate the Affirmation of Baptism of some the High School Freshmen in our congregation. This is a celebration moment in the life of a congregation as these young people will affirm the promises that were made for them in their Baptism. In a sense they are taking ownership of their faith, proclaiming “this is mine and this is what I believe.” The beautiful part of this service, as it relates the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, is that there are still promises being made on this young person’s behalf.

The difference is that, while the ownership of the life of faith is “handed” from parents and sponsors to the child, the congregation STILL promises to support them in their faith journey!

Baptism: People of God, do you promise to support (the baptized) and pray for them in their new life in Christ?

Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation): People of God, do you promise to support Siblings in Christ and pray for them in their life in Christ?

Same question, same promise, in many instances made 14ish years apart. Do you as a congregation promise to continue to care for the life of faith of those among you?

When we look at the Good Shepherd story in the context of the life of a congregation, and the promises we make, we realize that in speaking to his disciples in this way, in reminding them that he is their Shepherd, we see that Jesus is also giving them (and us) a commandment:

TO BE SHEPHERDS!

And, when we read this story in that context, the context of it being a call to be Shepherds for the body of Christ – we realize just how difficult and dirty a job it is.

- 1) It is difficult because there are stories aplenty about just how dumb sheep can be. It seems that every single year around Good Shepherd Sunday there is a viral video on the internet of a sheep doing something dumb. A couple of years ago it was a sheep stuck in a tire swing. This year it is a video of a sheep stuck in trench, getting pulled out, only to run for a while before jumping back into the trench. Being a shepherd is not easy.
- 2) Jesus tells us that it isn’t safe. “A shepherd will lay down their life for their sheep.” We know that Jesus is talking about himself and the literal cross that he will die upon. But, we also know that Jesus calls us to deny ourselves (put others first), take up our cross (put our pride aside), and follow Him!

People of God, as the Body of Christ we continually make promises to build up the body of Christ. The beauty is that the Body of Christ has done this since the beginning. That is why we are here. Someone did it for us. In our baptism, in affirming our faith, there was a congregation making promises to support us in our life of faith. That is what being church is about.

Good Shepherd Sunday isn’t necessarily, or solely, about being sheep, but the holy calling of being shepherds for generations to come.

Thanks be to God. AMEN

Apostle's Creed – in worship we celebrate the Affirmation of Baptism for our High School Freshman

Prayers

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Loving Shepherd, you know your own and your own know you. Your voice calls us to your loving embrace. Strengthen your church throughout the world that we bear witness to your expansive love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Gracious Shepherd, you are generous with the gifts of goodness and mercy. Restore your creation to wholeness so that cities and towns, countryside and wilderness, may abound with life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Hope-giving Shepherd, the nations and peoples are your heritage. Place into the hearts of all leaders and rulers the passion to serve. Crucify any desire to overpower others and give leaders joy in lifting up the lowly. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Abiding Shepherd, your love flows as we reach out to those around us. Move us with your Spirit, so that we lay down our lives for those in need. Help us love one another in truth and action. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Saving Shepherd, you restore us to wholeness. Help our community in our life together and give us vigor as a people of faith. In the midst of challenges and opportunities as we shift towards a return to in-person worship, remind us that those who gather virtually, or by worship in the mail, are as much the Body of Christ and the life of the congregation as those who are present in person, fill us anew with you Holy Spirit. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Eternal Shepherd, you hold us securely in your loving hands. In the assurance of resurrection hope, we remember our loved ones who have died in you. Bring us, with them, to dwell in your house forever. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

God of love,
you call us beloved children and welcome us to your table.

Receive our lives and the gifts we offer.

Abide with us and send us in service to a suffering world;
for the sake of your beloved Child, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he gave it for all to drink saying, “this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sins. So often as you do this, remember me.”

Once you've taken the elements say, "Wellspring of joy, through this meal you have put gladness in our hearts. Satisfy the hunger still around us, and send us as joyful witnesses, that your love may bring joy to the hearts of all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life,

Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,

bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

PLANS TO RE-OPEN FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP

At their most recent meeting, the Leadership Team of Good Shepherd approved plans to hold in-person worship starting on May 2. By now you should have received further details regarding those plans and what that return will look like. The hope is to make this the safest worship option for those who choose to use it. For now, make your plans to join us in person for one of two services on Sundays for the month of May!

Re-Connect Opportunities

We hope you will join us for any, or all, of these Re-Connect Opportunities throughout the week!

Stop in for coffee and conversation at 9 am on Mondays

TUESDAYS be sure to stop by for Bible Study starting at 11, followed by Lunch and Laughter at noon.

Wednesdays will continue to be our Faith Formation Days

Thursdays we will have the sanctuary open for prayer for 8 am to 3 pm.