

Fourth Sunday of Easter – Good Shepherd Sunday
May 8, 2022

Introduction to the Day

The gift of new life, of eternal life, is the gift of the risen Christ. It is the promise of Jesus. It was true for Dorcas in Joppa. It was true for those “who have come out of the great ordeal” in the Revelation vision. It is true for us and for all the baptized: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

In the waters of baptism,
we have passed over from death to life with Jesus
Christ,
and we are a new creation.

For this saving mystery, and for this water, let us
bless God,

who was, who is, and who is to come.

*Water may be poured into the font as the presiding
minister gives thanks.*

We thank you, God, for your river of life,
flowing freely from your throne:

through the earth,

through the city,

through every living thing.

You rescued Noah and his family from the flood;

You opened wide the sea for the Israelites.

Now in these waters you flood us with mercy,
and our sin is drowned forever.

You open the gate of righteousness
and we pass safely through.

In Jesus Christ, you calm and trouble the waters.

You nourish us and enclose us in safety.

You call us forth and send us out.

In lush and barren places, you are with us.

You have become our salvation.

Now breathe upon this water
and awaken your church once more.

Claim us again as your beloved and holy people.

Quench our thirst; cleanse our hearts; wipe away
every tear.

To you, our Beginning and our End,
our Shepherd and Lamb,

be honor, glory, praise, and thanksgiving,
now and forever.

Amen.

Gathering Hymn **“Christ the Lord is Risen Today, Alleluia!”**

#369 vs. 1,2,4

Greeting – The Grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

O God of peace, you brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great shepherd of the sheep. By the blood of your eternal covenant, make us complete in everything good that we may do your will, and work among us all that is well-pleasing in your sight, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Reading: Psalm 23

¹ The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul.

He leads me in right paths
for his name’s sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

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

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

Gospel: John 10:22-30

²²At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." ²⁵Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; ²⁶but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. ³⁰The Father and I are one."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

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

By now you've hopefully picked up on the repetition of this Easter season. Week after week themes have weaved their way through our Gospel texts, and this Sunday is no different.

Just last week Jesus was on the shore eating breakfast with his disciples when he asked Peter, "Do you love me?" In that exchange we hear three times that Peter does indeed love Jesus, and each time Jesus responds by telling him what loving him would look like. "Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep."

To love Jesus is to care for the flock that he has entrusted to us.

It's that simple. Sermon done. Thanks for coming.

Except it isn't.

It is actually quite difficult. It is a large task. But, it is an important task.

I was recently talking with a friend that has become disenfranchised with "church." Often when you hear this, what is really being said is that they don't like organized religion. It is difficult for people who have become disenfranchised with church to see through the dominant narrative of church in society. Newsflash, a pretty picture isn't painted of what church is, unfortunately.

And, this demographic of people who have become disenfranchised with church is actually quite large. So large, in fact, that they have been given a label. They are the “nones.” When asked what religion they align themselves with, their answer would be “none.”

This is, again unformately, because they have experienced the worst of what church can sometimes be and they feel the hypocrisy of “the church.” They turn on the television or go on social media and they see religion as a hammer to get people to think the way you want them to think. And, when religion and the Bible are used in such a way, people see right through it, and no longer hear the Gospel, the Good News, that ought to be preached from it.

When religion and the Bible are used as weapons we miss the words we will find in it. “Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Feed my sheep.”

So often, for church people, when the topic of people who have been disenfranchised with church comes up, the question is, “How could they not believe?”

Perhaps a better question would be, “How have we done as the body of Christ in testifying to God’s grace and mercy?”

You see, the other thing that this demographic of people will sometimes (but not always) tell you is that they are “spiritual but not religious.” They believe the things that they hope to experience from the church, but the church itself has done a poor job of lending them that experience.

This demographic is typically, but not limited to, young people. Not all of the “nones” are young people, and not all young people are “nones,” but generally speaking this is a younger demographic.

Jesus, in our Gospel last week ends his dialog with Peter by simply stating, “Follow me.”

Jesus, in our Gospel for today tells us, “My sheep hear My voice. I know them, and they follow me.”

The fact that these conversations like the one I had with my friend happen at all is because those who have become disenfranchised with the church hear Jesus’ voice, Jesus knows them, and they follow. They’re simply turned off by organized religion that gets itself bogged down in the other matters of being church, and forgets sometimes about the Gospel, or as Psalm 23 puts it, “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”

That is a promise they know. That is a promise they long to experience when they come to church. That is a promise they would love to see churches living out day in and day out. But, so often, they don’t. They see the opposite.

So, people of faith, do our actions as church testify the goodness and mercy of God’s love, or do they testify to our care for the institution and saying the right thing instead of doing the right thing?

It is a difficult question to ask. And it is a difficult question to think we ought to have to answer. But, we do.

That is hearing Jesus’ voice in this text. That is following Jesus in our Gospel for today.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

Song of the Day “Blessing, Honor, and Glory”

#433

The Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Living God,
you gather the wolf and the lamb to feed together
in your peaceable reign,
and you welcome us all at your table.
Reach out to us through this meal,
and show us your wounded and risen body,
that we may be nourished and believe
in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

Set free from captivity to sin and death, we pray to the God of resurrection for the church, people in need, and all of creation.

Gentle Shepherd, enable your church to respond to the voice of Jesus. Give us unflinching trust, unafraid to join in Jesus' work of renewing all things. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Feed your people at the table of creation. Prepare a safe place for those whose environments are dangerous or unhealthy, especially those making difficult journeys. Prosper your creation for the sake of every living thing. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Warm the hearts of all who celebrate and all who mourn on Mother's Day. Accompany those yearning to be mothers. Help us to heal from broken family relationships and open us to receive your nurturing love from all who serve mothering roles in our lives. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Seek out those who weep while they await healing or consolation (*especially for Gena, Peyton, Kathy, Matt, Bob and Joanne, Jim and Sandy, Bob and Kay, Joe, Bill and Bonnie, David, Cassie, Keith and JoJo, Sherm and Mary, Frank and Heather, Verna, Bob and Sonja, Irene, Jacob*). Set people in their path who can provide the care they need, and wipe away every tear from their eyes. God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Inspire the words of prophets and saints who employ innovative imagery to stretch our understanding (*as did Julian of Norwich, whom we commemorate today*). Send Christ to instruct us with motherly care. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Enfold us in the great multitude of saints from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages. Wash us in your saving grace every day, guiding us to your waters of life. God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

In your mercy, O God, respond to these prayers, and renew us by your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Communion

Prayer

We give you thanks, generous God,

for in this bread and cup

we have tasted the new heaven and earth

where hunger and thirst are no more.

Send us from this table as witnesses to the resurrection,

that through our lives, all may know life in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Blessing

God, the Author of life,

Christ, the living Cornerstone,

and the life-giving Spirit of adoption,

✠ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Sending Song

“Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us”

#789

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace. Tell what God has done.

Thanks be to God.

Announcements

The flowers on the altar are placed by Jean Wahl in honor of their anniversary.