

Fourth Sunday of Easter – Good Shepherd Sunday
April 30th, 2023

Introduction to the Day

Today is sometimes called “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Jesus is called the “gate” of the sheep in today’s gospel.

The risen Christ opens the way to abundant life. He anoints our heads with oil and guides us beside the still waters of our baptism. Each Sunday he spreads a feast before us amid the world’s violence and war. We go forth to be signs of the resurrection and extend God’s tender care to all creation.

Greeting – The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
by whose hand we are given new birth,
by whose speaking we are given new life.
Amen.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are welcomed, restored, and supported
as citizens of the new creation.
Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Silence for Reflection

Holy God,
holy and merciful,
holy and mighty,
you are the river of life,
you are the everlasting wellspring.

In mercy and might you have freed us from death
and raised us with Jesus, the firstborn of the dead.
In baptismal waters our old life is washed away,
and in them we are born anew.

As water is poured into the font

Glory to you for oceans and lakes,
for rivers and streams.

Honor to you for waters that wash us clean,
quench our thirst, and nurture both crops and
creatures.

Praise to you for the life-giving water of baptism,
the outpouring of the Spirit of the new creation.

**Wash away our sin and all that separates us
from you.**

**Empower our witness to your resurrection.
Strengthen our resolve in seeking justice for all.**

Satisfy the world’s need through this living water.
Where drought dries the earth, bring refreshment.
Where despair prevails, grant hope.
Where chaos reigns, bring peace.
We ask this through Christ,
who with you and the Spirit reigns forever.
Amen.

Gathering Hymn

“I Know That My Redeemer Lives”

#619 vs. 1,2,6,8

Prayer of the Day

**O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death.
Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your
house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and forever.**

Amen.

Psalm 23

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

²**The 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.

⁴**Though 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.

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

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

Gospel: John 10:1-10

[Jesus said:] ¹"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

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.

Our Gospel text for this Good Shepherd Sunday takes us back in time regarding where we find ourselves in Jesus' life and resurrection.

The first three Sundays of the Easter Sunday bring us texts of resurrection encounters, from the empty tomb to Thomas and the rest of the 11 in the locked room, to the other disciples on the Road to Emmaus, all of our texts are literal resurrection encounters.

And, with them, we are able to imagine what those encounters would have been like for us, while also thinking about where it is that we see those moments in our own lives now.

Now, on this the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday, we are presented with a moment before Jesus' death, where he is just coming off of a Q&A that stems from the healing of a blind man. In that Q&A, Jesus launches into a parable.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and those who follow Him are His sheep. They know his voice. They come when he calls them. They do not stray. But, if they do, he will find them.

This leaves us feeling good knowing that we have the Good Shepherd watching over us, so good in fact that we name churches after this image. Because it is good to be looked after, cared for, and guarded against the "thief" that may come to scatter us or take us away.

But, how does this inform our post resurrection life as Easter People? What does this have to with the tomorrows that we face each and every day? What does this say to the Holy Saturdays that we spend longing for our own resurrection encounters?

- 1) There is a refrain theme repeats itself throughout this text: Being known

- a. “The sheep hear my voice...and they come to me.”
 - i. This is Jesus giving guidance to his followers for what they will need for life beyond. This exchange is part of Jesus telling his followers that he will one day be gone from this earth, but that doesn’t mark the end for them.
 - ii. “They follow Him (the Shepherd) because they know his voice”
 - b. “He calls His own sheep by name.”
 - i. We know there is great meaning in our names. If you’ve ever named anything at all, you know the weight that name carries. And, to hear your name called feels good.
 - ii. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, knows our names. But, not only does He know our names, he calls us by name, telling us that we are known by God our creator.
- 2) Though this is a pre-death and resurrection text, Jesus tells us what it means for us and our future, our life beyond.
- a. As we find ourselves in this Easter Season wondering about our own Tomorrows and what we will need for them, Jesus tells us what Holy Saturday is all about. It is our belief as people of faith that on that Holy Saturday of waiting between Friday’s crucifixion and Sunday’s resurrection that Jesus descended into hell. That is in our statement of faith. And on that day, in descending to hell, Jesus defeated sin, death, and the power of the devil, and on Sunday rose victorious.
 - b. This does not mean that we don’t sin, never experience death, and are pulled in different directions by the power of the devil. It DOES mean that those things do not have the final say. Those things do not have victory over us. In fact it is the opposite.
 - c. Jesus tells those who are listening that day, “the thief (we assume the devil) comes to steal and kill and destroy. I CAME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY!”

In all of his talking in parable, Jesus realizes that what how is talking to those who listen is making no sense. The Shepherd is a wonderful image, but they missed it. And it is in his realization that they aren’t understanding what he is telling them that we get from this what we need as we face our own tomorrows.

Jesus comes that we might have life and have it abundantly.

Now, do we know what that actually means? Like all things about life eternal, no, we don’t necessarily have a clue what he’s talking about.

What does it mean to have life abundantly?

People of God, that is on us to figure out. What does it mean for us as people of faith, a community of faith, to not only have life, but to have life abundantly? How do we live into that call that Jesus lays out for us? It comes back to what Jesus is trying to get at with his Shepherd/sheep imagery.

Sheep hear their Shepherd’s voice and they respond to it. But they know the Shepherd’s voice because he calls them by name.

We are each named in baptism as God’s children. It is that promise, the promise of baptism, that we together live into figuring out what it means to have life and have it abundantly.

And, it is in THAT figuring out that we find what we need for tomorrow.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

Hymn of the Day

“Shepherd Me, O God”

#780

Apostle’s Creed

Prayers of Intercession

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

You are the shepherd who gathers us in your mighty and loving arms. Help your church to listen for your voice, especially when the voices of sin, idolatry, and oppression threaten to overpower us. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

The green pastures, still waters, and dark valleys of this earth all belong to you, O Lord. Sustain your creation with a love that is both mighty and just. Where there is destruction, bring healing. Where there is desolation, bring abundance. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You proclaim shepherding love, comfort, and protection for all people and all of creation. Direct leaders in our own time to learn from your example and instruction. Give them servant hearts, that they generously seek the good of all. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You journey with us wherever our paths may lead. We pray for those feeling overwhelmed by anxiety or depression or suffering in any way (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Verna, Irene, Connie, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Sandy*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You are the sheepgate that gives safety to your beloved flocks. Provide protection for refugees, victims of domestic violence, those who are imprisoned, and all people who are vulnerable to violence and mistreatment. (*Local concerns may be named.*) Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You call your sheep by name and lead them through the valley of death. We give you thanks for those who have died and now dwell in your house forever (*especially*). Be with those who mourn, and give them hope in the promise of resurrection. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ's resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Generous God,
in this meal you offer your very self.
We give thanks for these gifts of the earth.
In the breaking of this bread
reveal to us the Risen One.
In the pouring of this wine
pour us out in service to the world;
through Christ our Lord.

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

Gracious God,
in you we live and move and have our being.
With your word and this meal of grace,
you have nourished our life together.
Strengthen us to show your love
and serve the world in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Blessing

The God of all,
who raised ✠ Jesus from the dead,
bless you by the power of the Holy Spirit
to live in the new creation.

Amen.

Sending Song

“Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us”

#789 vs. 1,4

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord!

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!

And all of Good Shepherd said...

AMEN!

April Financial Snapshot

Through April 24

Total
Revenue **\$25,561**

1 more Sunday Offerings to Come

Total
Expenses **\$25,770**

April Difference
\$209

The Opportunity:

With one more Sunday to go in April
the opportunity is in front of us to build
up a cushion for the typical drop in
summer giving.

Feeling Generous?

Consider a "Rebound Gift" to help
recover from the extraordinarily high
Xcel bills of the
first quarter of the year.



KNOWN – SEEN – LOVED

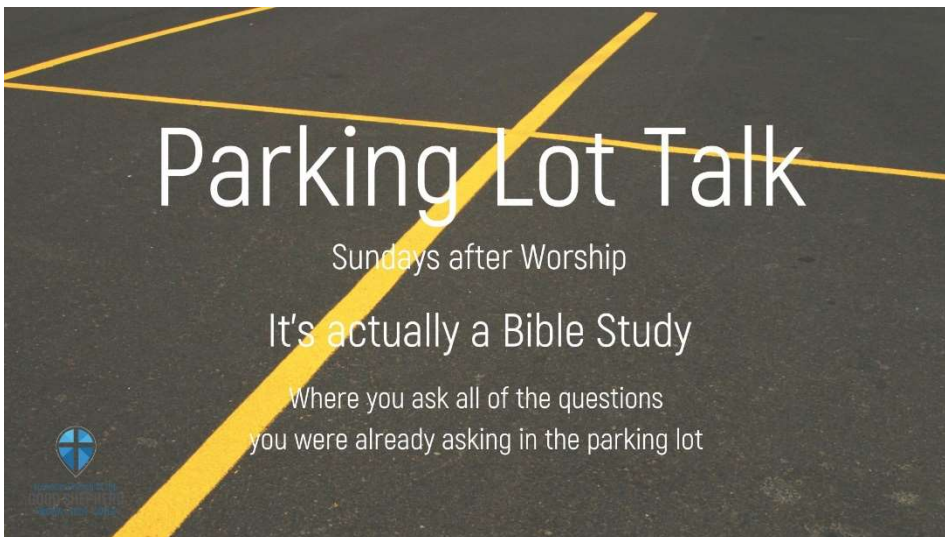
That is our mission.

To be certain that each person that comes into our building is KNOWN – SEEN – LOVED. By God and by us. That's why we have nametags. Not only do we want to know your name, we want to use it.

SO, Be sure to grab your nametag from the board near the fellowship entrance.

Don't see your name? Grab a blank one and fill it out! Put it back up on the board after worship and we'll have a printed one for you the next week!

(Looking at the nametag board, we noticed there are many missing that we know used to be up there. Perhaps you've got yours at home. Please don't feel like we've erased you. Be gracious with us and let us know if yours is missing.)



Did you know?

We are adding a Sunday Morning Bible Study! We're calling it, "Parking Lot Talk." Not because the parking lot is anything worth talking about, but because we know that you leave church asking all sorts of questions in the parking lot.

Well, now we're giving you a space to ask them.

What did you hear in the Gospel text?

What surprised you?

What didn't you like?

And, the one we're most excited for:

CAN YOU BELIEVE PASTOR SAID THAT?!?!?!?