

Introduction to the Day

This Sunday's image of how the risen Christ shares his life with us is the image of the vine. Christ the vine and we the branches are alive in each other, in the mystery of mutual abiding described in the gospel and the first letter of John. Baptism makes us a part of Christ's living and life-giving self and makes us alive with Christ's life. As the vine brings food to the branches, Christ feeds us at his table. We are sent out to bear fruit for the life of the world.

**Christ is risen!**

Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!

**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.

**Welcome**

**Thanksgiving for Baptism**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
the wellspring of grace,  
our Easter and our joy.

**Amen.**

Look, here is water!

**Here is our water of life! Alleluia!**

Immersed in the promises of baptism,  
let us give thanks for what God has done for us.  
**We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning  
your voice thundered over the deep  
and water became the essence of life.  
Adam and Eve beheld Eden's verdant rivers.  
The ark carried your creation through the flood  
into a new day.  
Miriam led the dancing as your people passed  
through the sea  
into freedom's land.  
In a desert pool the Ethiopian official  
entered your boundless baptismal life.**

Look, here is water!

**Here is our water of life! Alleluia!**

At the river your beloved Son was baptized by John  
and anointed with the Holy Spirit.

By the baptism of Jesus' death and resurrection  
you opened the floodgates of your reconciling love,  
freeing us to live as Easter people.

We rejoice with glad hearts,  
giving all honor and praise to you,  
through the risen Christ, our source of living water,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

Look, here is water!

**Here is our water of life! Alleluia!**

**Gathering Hymn**

**Now All the Vault of heaven Resounds**

**#367 vs. 1,2**

**Prayer of the Day**

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**Reading – Acts 8:26-40**

<sup>26</sup>An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) <sup>27</sup>So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a

court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship<sup>28</sup> and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.<sup>29</sup> Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.”<sup>30</sup> So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”<sup>31</sup> He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.<sup>32</sup> Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
so he does not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”<sup>35</sup> Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.<sup>36</sup> As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?”<sup>38</sup> He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.<sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.<sup>40</sup> But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

## Children’s Message

### Holy Gospel – John 15:1-8

[Jesus said:]<sup>1</sup> “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower.<sup>2</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.<sup>3</sup> You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you.<sup>4</sup> Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.

<sup>6</sup>Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.<sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.<sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

P: The Gospel of our Lord

**C: 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

I’m not certain there is anyone, who upon hearing this Gospel text, doesn’t hear condemnation language.

Perhaps you are out there, and that is good, but the condemnation language seems to be quite prevalent in what Jesus has to say to his followers in this exchange which happens before his death.

And, life circumstance may make that condemnation language seem even louder depending where you might find yourself in whichever phase of life you’re in, or however it is that you may look back upon the life you lived.

There is a distinct call in this Gospel text to bear fruit.

We can talk ourselves in circles about what that specific phrase means and I don’t know that we will ever come to a definition that is 100% pleasing to all who hear it, and again that is shaped by our life experiences, each of which is different from the person next to us.

But it is language that is difficult to remove ourselves from. Because it is strong language. And because it is difficult language to remove ourselves from, it becomes equally difficult to not make that the subject of the whole text.

We hear the call to bear fruit and we attach it to the condemnation language of “and if you don’t you will be gathered like branches and burned.”

If this, then that. It is undeniably how we hear the whole of this Gospel text.

In reality, this Gospel text is really kind of split in two.

The first part is very much about bearing fruit, which again is a very difficult phrase to pin a definition to. But, as much as we want this text to be about the fruit that we bear, or don’t bear, Jesus call in this Gospel text is really about where it is that we find our root.

Fruit, on its own, does not just happen. As we look more and more at the picture that Jesus paints we might find ourselves in our own gardens, thinking about the many things that we tend to as the season turns to spring and we eagerly get our fingers dirty in the soil that is God’s creation. And we know, that fruit does not just happen on its own.

Rather, there is an immense amount of nourishment and nurturing that goes into growing a garden year in and year out.

And that is what Jesus is calling us to. He is calling us to tend to our roots. And that root is Him and all that he teaches.

Just last week we had Pastor Paul Oman in worship painting for us a beautiful picture of the Good Shepherd story (which is included at the end of this message). In talking about the painting and the Good Shepherd story and different texts throughout scripture, Pastor Paul pointed to the language in the well-known passage of Psalm 23.

Psalm 23 is a passage that many know well, and for some it even rolls right off of the tongue.

There is a phrase in that text, though, that gets at the root of what it is that we hear in our Gospel text for today, and the call within.

When the Psalmist wrote the words for, “He restores my soul” there were other meanings that could have been in play. As Pastor Oman stated, “the original language says one of two things, 1) he leads me back or better yet goes out and finds me and brings me back, and 2) he causes me to repent.”

It is this understanding of God who created us that sheds new light on this Gospel text that we have just heard. Truthfully, I do not believe in a God who condemns, or better yet, the condemnation that we might expect is nothing like what we will experience. Rather, the condemnation we might experience is discovering that those who we believe deserve God’s condemnation find themselves in the same place that we find ourselves in the end, and hopefully that is at the feet of our creator.

Why? Because we believe in a God who goes out and finds those whom God has created and brings them back into the fold. The flipside of tending to a garden and nurturing and caring for that which we’ve planted, is the undeniable uncontrollability of the weeds that we wish weren’t there.

And, sometimes, that is God. So often when we feel that tug to return us to the God's presence, we want to run. But like a pesky weed in a garden God's grace continues to make its way to us, undeniably and uncontrollably, because that is what good roots do.

People of God, in this Gospel text we are not called to think about that for which we may be condemned. Rather, we are called to think about what it is that saves us from that condemnation.

That, folks, is the love of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus calls us to make a dwelling place in the love that He preaches and teaches. He calls us to think about how it is that we might nurture the fruit among us. How it is that we might care for this beautiful garden that we are called to live in.

That is the call. That is the Gospel. That is our hope. That we are rooted in the undeniable, uncontrollable, grace of God. Thanks be to God. AMEN



**Hymn of the Day**

**“Blest Be the Tie That Binds”**

**#656**

**Apostle's Creed**

**Prayers**

Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

*A brief silence.*

We pray for the church around the world, for all ministers, and for the mission of the gospel. Keep all the newly baptized and confirmed in your care. Cleanse our hearts with your word and help us to abide in you always.

God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

For the well-being of the earth and of all created things: for rivers and lakes, streams and estuaries, melting glaciers and polluted waters (*local bodies of water may be named*). Renew the face of the earth and shower us with your goodness. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

For the nations and all those in authority: for local, state, and national leaders, for elected representatives at every level, and for international organizations, that justice and peace may reign. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

For all those in need: for any experiencing homelessness or unemployment, for those fleeing from oppression or seeking asylum, and for all who are ill or suffering (*We pray especially for Matt, David, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Cherri, Peggy, John, Judy, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Dan and Sharon, Roger and MaryLee,*). God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

For this congregation: for the caring ministries of this faith community, for all who visit and minister to one another, for all who take communion to homes or care centers, and for all who seek to share your love with the world. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

With thanksgiving for the saints who rest from their labors. Help us, like them, to bear much fruit and to become your disciples, and at the last, bring us to that heavenly banquet where all will feast together at your table. God of grace,

**hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord.

**Amen.**

**Peace**

**Offering**

**Offertory Prayer**

Risen One,

you call us to believe and bear fruit.

May the gifts that we offer here

be signs of your abiding love.

Form us to be your witnesses in the world,

through Jesus Christ, our true vine.

Amen.

**Sacrament of Holy Communion**

**Lord's Prayer**

The risen Christ is made known to us  
in the breaking of the bread.

Come and eat at God's table.

**Post Communion Prayer**

Shepherding God,

you have prepared a table before us  
and nourished us with your love.

Send us forth from this banquet

to proclaim your goodness

and share the abundant mercy of Jesus,

our redeemer and friend. **Amen.**

## Dismissal

Christ is risen!

**Christ is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Go in peace. Rejoice and be glad.

**Okay! We will! Thanks be to God.**

And all of Good Shepherd said,

**“AMEN”**

## Sending Hymn

**“Let All Things Now Living”**

**#881**

## Blessing

The God of resurrection power,

the Christ of unending joy,

and the Spirit of Easter hope

✠ bless you now and always.

**Amen.**

## Your Generosity in Action:



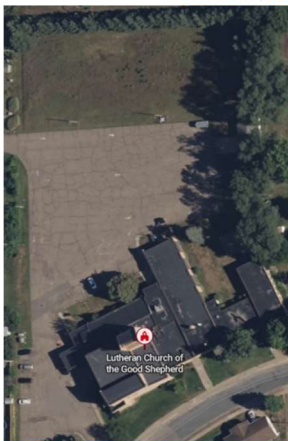
Sunday, April 21 we were grateful to have Pastor Paul Oman - Drawn to the Word with us for worship during which he painted the beautiful painting of the Good Shepherd story for our Good Shepherd Sunday Celebration.

This wonderful gift was made possible from the generosity of Lois Stols in leaving a gift for her church after her death, and Clarice Gardow generously giving to her church here and now.

We are excited to have this painting that will forever hang in the sanctuary here at Good Shepherd.

**THANK YOU!!**

Monthly Financials to date:	Total Revenue	Total Expenses	Difference
	<b>\$25,747</b>	<b>\$27,764</b>	<b>-\$2,017</b>
	2023: \$24,969	2023: \$25,770	Checkbook thru March \$28,602



## Special Congregation Meeting

Following worship April 28th  
For the purpose of discussing the many property needs facing us as a congregation and our future together as the church that God is calling us to be.

