

Home Service for 5/3/2020

Welcome and Announcements

Although we cannot meet together in the church building we can share worship together in our individual homes. We will continue to work to stay connected and be there for each other during the difficult time. We are going through something never experience before. I hope this will help you worship God today with those who are in your home. Add hymns if possible, too.

Continue prayers for Jamie Brown as she continues to recover from her car accident.

Gathering Words (John 10)

Hey, you sheep. Yes, you over there. Can't you hear the shepherd calling— calling you to come and join with the others? There's life and love and care and direction here just waiting for you to hear and see. So come on in through the gate. He's been waiting for you.

Opening Prayer:

Shepherding God, bring us into your fold. Lead us beside still waters and restore our souls. Help us see the way we should go, the way we should live. Help us hear your voice calling our name. Enliven this time of worship, that we may find true life as we join with others: praising your name, celebrating your great goodness, and sharing your love for all people. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Shepherding God, be with us in our need. Like sheep who have gone astray— we have not heeded your voice, calling us to follow the right paths, beckoning us to lie down and be restored; we have acted as if our salvation lies in busyness and control. We do not want to be sheep— dependent on a shepherd for everything. We want to do it alone— to maintain our independence. Forgive us for rejecting your shepherding care and your love and guidance. Forgive us for our need to do it by ourselves, to be separate from the flock. Forgive us for doubting your presence in times of trouble. Forgive us our despair in the face of seemingly unrelenting evil and death. Lead us back to the path of life. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Jesus said, I have come that you may have life and have it abundantly.

In so confessing, we have returned to the shepherd, the guardian of our souls who welcomes us with open arms and a glad heart. Know that the shepherd of our lives never abandons us, is always calling our name, and unfailingly loves and forgives us.

Read Psalm 23 King James Version (KJV)

23 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth 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.

Prayers of the People:

Merciful and loving God, you call us your beloved ones and you seek to protect us, but we love to take risks, emotionally, spiritually, physically. Call to us again. Help us to hear your voice. Give us hearts of love and compassion for all our dear ones who suffer illness and any adversity. Be with those who travel, having no home to which to return, no land they can call theirs, no sense of ever being community again. They truly hunger and thirst in every way and you have called us to meet those needs – not to turn them away because they might be different. You always accepted us, so let us accept others, realizing that your sheep of your pasture are awash with diversity of spirit and origin. Let us celebrate those wonderful gifts and learn from them for we ask this in the name of the Good shepherd. AMEN.

Continue with your personal prayers to God before going to the Lord's Prayer.

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

Read the Lesson: Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹ For it is commendable if someone bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because they are conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

²² "He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth."^[a]

²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." ²⁵ For "you were like sheep going astray,"^[b] but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 10:1-10

10 “Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.^[a] They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Message

The shepherd that is revered by the psalmist is celebrated by John as both shepherd and gate for the sheep. We rejoice that Jesus our shepherd calls us each by name, and is the one who came that we may have abundant life. This abundant life is described in Acts as a result of fellowship, breaking bread together, prayer, attention to the apostle’s teaching, and sharing all things in common. How far we have moved from that early paradigm of selfless giving! But when we return to our shepherd and guardian after going astray, we are healed and welcomed home.

In general, we don’t like being compared to sheep. And while the image of God as shepherd may be nostalgically comforting, for many it doesn’t fit with our everyday lives. But focusing on a God who loves us deeply, who takes care of us and guides us along the way, who will never abandon us, and who calls us by name is an image worth lifting up and preserving, even if it is expressed in an anachronistic way.

We live in a great nation that is diverse. In the midst of this diversity, as believers, we realize there is only one way to heaven. We know some of those Scripture verses that remind us of this fact. In the Gospel, John writes Jesus’ words: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Later on Luke pens the Apostles’ words as they were put in prison and let out, they remind us that: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under

heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (ACTS 4:12). Time and time again the Lord reminds us that it is only through Him and through Christ alone there is salvation. In our Gospel we find that the Lord reminds us again that He is the good shepherd. In these ten verses Jesus is the door or gate for His sheep.

The words in this chapter of John were spoken to the disciples, and they were also spoken to the leaders of the day. The church leaders of Jesus' day had become false prophets; because they were combining many things that were not needed for salvation. Jesus, as He lived on earth, told the scribes and Pharisees that they were making the Lord's religion a religion of rules taught by men. They were the thieves and robbers who were trying to steal salvation from God's people, from His sheep. The true sheep of God's flock were not going to listen to the scribes and Pharisees. The true sheep of God's flock realized that keeping all of God's Law was not enough to save them.

The beautiful description we have here is that Jesus is concerned about His flock and His sheep: and the sheep, who listen to his voice. The Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd enters through the door of the sheep pen. Jesus also calls Himself the Door or gate. He says, I am the gate for the sheep. The sheep listen to His voice, because it is a familiar voice. Over and over the Lord reminds us that He is the Good Shepherd and also the Gate.

Jesus speaks to His sheep and His sheep listen to His voice. You and I have gather to hear the voice of Jesus speaking to us. We have gather to be reminded of the fact that the Lord is our Shepherd and the Lord is our Gate. The Lord is our only way of salvation. The assurance that we have is that the true sheep are going to listen to God's voice. They are going to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd. Mark tells us in the last days what happens: "For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect--if that were possible" (MARK 13:22).

We need to hear that voice of Jesus saying, "Yes, our sins stand as condemnation for each one of us." Because in hearing those words, we realize that we cannot save ourselves. In hearing those words of the law, we realize that Christ is our only Good Shepherd. Jesus is our only Door of salvation. We listen to His voice that says, "Sinners, your sins are forgiven." Jesus is the Door for His sheep; and we, as His sheep, listen to His voice. Jesus' voice says to each true sheep, "Come. I have forgiven your sins." In the sacrament of the Lord's Supper Jesus says, "Come, eat my body and drink my blood, and be reminded how much I have done for you."

The Lord tells us in John: "We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood" (1 JOHN 4:6). We have God's Word. As we listen to God's voice, we know what is true and right. As we understand what is true we also recognize what is wrong and false. Jesus is the Door for His sheep. We as His sheep listen to His voice, and we as His sheep follow Him in His footsteps.

On these Sundays after Easter we celebrate the fact that Jesus rose again from the dead. Jesus, the door, gives us a reason to follow in His footsteps. We hear His voice, a voice that says, "Your sins are forgiven." We follow Him, because of what He has done for us. What does that mean in this life? In this life to take a stand as a believer, to take a stand as a Christian, is not always a popular stand. It is not always a politically correct stand. It means that we still have to stand firm. We still have to listen to Jesus' voice. As we listen to Jesus' voice, we still want to follow His footsteps. Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (LUKE 9:23).

We still have our crosses from time to time in our daily life, but the Lord says, "Hear My voice. Follow my footsteps, because you will have a full life." Peter writes: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away" (1 PETER 5:4). Peter reminds us that we are more than sheep, we are God's children. If we are God's children, we are heirs of eternal life. The inheritance our loving Lord has prepared for us is to sit beside Him on thrones of glory with "crowns of glory" that will never fade away. Jesus the Good Shepherd came so that the world might have life and have it to the fullest. Jesus' true sheep rejoice in this certainty of salvation.

The question for all us to answer this morning is whether we will be willing to be guided through the journey of life by Jesus, the shepherd or do we want to go it alone? Are you willing to accept Jesus as the guide for your life? Are you willing to accept Jesus as the good shepherd who calls us by name? And when you do allow Jesus to be that good shepherd, then life takes on a certain peace and restfulness. It doesn't mean that no troubles will come your way, but when they do you have the good shepherd to guide you through. Jesus guides us and give us a measure of His peace.

A poem by Jo Ann Kelly says it best:

"Are you anxious in the midst of life's problems
As you wake up each new day?
Do you worry about the past or future,
Or ponder problems that might come your way?
There is no reason to fear or falter
We have One who knows and understands,
He is there even in the midnight hour,
Jesus will calm the storm, He will hold your hand.
Jesus still speaks peace to the troubled waters
They will not overtake your soul,
The Good Shepherd cares for His sheep,
Our Lord will lead and guide you, in the safety of His fold.
Jesus speaks peace with the greatest love ever told,
He will be there every moment of the day,
Worry not about the past or tomorrow, our Lord is in control,
The Savior walks with us and hears us as we pray.
Rest in God and let Him fight your battles
He knows all things from the beginning to the end,
Great peace He will bestow, as onward you go,
Look up to the Savior, He is your dearest Friend. "

Yes, we live in a country that is diverse. We live in a country where there is freedom of religion and speech and all of the other blessings that we enjoy. In the midst of all this diversity the Lord says there is only one way to heaven. This is still the simple truth for eternal salvation. This is what we are reminded of this day when Jesus reminds us that He is the Good Shepherd. Jesus reminds us that He is the Gate for His sheep. There is only one Gate, one Door to heaven; and that is through Christ and Christ alone. Jesus is that Door for His sheep. His sheep listen to His voice, and His sheep follow His footsteps.

As we read Psalm 23, it begins and ends with that very thought of listening to Jesus' voice and following His footsteps. It says: "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters...(The sheep listen to His voice.) Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (PSALM 23:1,2,6). The sheep follow Jesus', the good shepherd's footsteps into heaven. It may not always be easy, but the Lord promises a full life. The Lord is

our Door. We are His sheep who listen to His voice and need to pay attention to it. We are His sheep who are anxious and excited to follow His footsteps, not just here on earth, but also right through the door into heaven itself. Jesus is that Door. Amen.

Benediction:

We have been refreshed and restored.
We have been called and guided.
Let us go forth knowing who our true shepherd is,
following his path, secure in the knowledge
that goodness and mercy will follow us
all the days of our life. Amen.