

Home Service for 5/8/2022

Welcome and Announcements

You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

Christ is our shepherd, who knows us and calls us. Our shepherd gives us eternal life; no one can snatch us from his hand.

Call to Worship:

From every nation, in every language, we cry out: “Salvation belongs to our God, and to the Lamb!” Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving! Honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen! Amen!

Opening Prayer:

You are the Good Shepherd, Lord, we hear your call; we know your voice; we follow your paths. You lead us beside still waters. You guide us to the springs of life. You shelter us and restore our souls. In you we find life everlasting. We come humbly into your presence this day, in praise, worship, and adoration. Our hearts run over with your unfailing goodness and never-ending love. In the name of our Savior, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Master, Savior, Shepherd, Messiah; we know you by many names, Lord. Your presence fills our lives; all that we are and all that we have comes from you; all that you do declares your love for us. Yet when trouble comes, when adversity plagues us, we wonder where you are; we even wonder who you are. How quickly we forget that you are always with us. Dispel our gloom and despair. Change our garments of darkness into robes of dazzling light. Spread your table before us, and feed us from your hand. Lead us in the paths of righteousness, for it is in your name that we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Even in the darkest valley, though death’s shadow may threaten us, we need not fear, for the Lord is with us. God will comfort and shelter us. No harm will come to us. No one can snatch us out of the Lord’s hand. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes.

Read Psalm 23

The LORD *is* my shepherd;

I shall not ^[a]want.

² He makes me to lie down in ^[b]green pastures;

He leads me beside the ^[c]still waters.

³ He restores my soul;

He leads 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 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 runs over.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will ^[d]dwell in the house of the LORD

^[e]Forever.

Prayers of the People:

Help us to move beyond the "sampler" prayer so often found printed on pillows, on wall hangings: "The Lord is my Shepherd." Help us to understand what those words truly mean, O Lord. We can count on you. You are the one who holds our lives, guides our steps, comforts and sustains us. You want for us the lush greenness of verdant pastures and the alluring draw of still waters; yet you know that our lives will not be smooth; there will be rough times. We can count on you, Lord. We can place our trust in you. Help us to feel the power of the Psalmist's words: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." Nothing can trouble, nothing can threaten. You are with us. As we reach out in love and service to others, remind us that the work we do in your name, with love and compassion, is an echo of your tender mercy and loving care. Strengthen us and give us enthusiasm to follow the Shepherd all the days of our lives. AMEN.

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 9:36-43

In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷ About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. ³⁸ Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, "Please come at once!"

³⁹ Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them.

⁴⁰ Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. ⁴² This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. ⁴³ Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

Read the Epistle Lesson: Revelation 7:9-17

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb."

¹¹ All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:

"Amen!

Praise and glory

and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

¹³ Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

¹⁴ I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore,

“they are before the throne of God

and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne
will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ ‘Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.

The sun will not beat down on them,^{’[a]}
nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb at the center of the throne
will be their shepherd;

‘he will lead them to springs of living water.’^[b]

‘And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.’^[c]”

Read the Gospel Lesson: John 10:22-30

Then came the Festival of Dedication^[a] at Jerusalem. It was winter,²³ and Jesus was in the temple courts walking in Solomon’s Colonnade.²⁴ The Jews who were there gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

²⁵ Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father’s name testify about me,²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all^[b]; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

Message

Today is Mother’s Day, the fourth Sunday of Easter, and is also called Good Shepherd Sunday in some churches. For this is the Sunday that we set aside in the church year to celebrate that Jesus is our Good Shepherd and we are His sheep.

Some days the hardest thing for me to believe is that I am good enough to be a believer, especially when you look at what God expects of believers. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote that: Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) These are signs of love. But when I look at myself, do I see myself as always trusting, always hoping, and always persevering? I have to admit when I am totally honest I fall humanly short of that standard. So how do I know I really am one of Jesus' sheep?

In today's Gospel, the Jews wanted to know who Christ was. Was He really the Shepherd? The Jews wanted to know if Jesus was really claiming to be the Messiah or not. Instead of answering the question who He was immediately, Jesus answered the question by asking them: "who are YOU?" Were they sheep seeking the Shepherd? As you listen to this sermon; Jesus poses this same question of you. Why are you here? Who are you? Are you the sheep that you claim to be?

What's the first sign of a sheep? Jesus said, My sheep listen to my voice. Do we listen? God's Word says that faith comes from HEARING the message. (Romans 10:17) Faith is being sure of what we hope for, certain of what we DON'T SEE." (Hebrews 11:1) Throughout Revelation Jesus continues to say, "he who has EARS let him HEAR what the Spirit says!"

The first key sign as to whether or not you are a sheep is whether you are willing to listen to the Word of the Lord or not. The problem with the Jews who came to Jesus is that they didn't really come to listen to Jesus' voice, but to stone him to death. They didn't come to listen, but to find something to convict Jesus of. You see, it's not enough just to come to Christ and demand Him to tell you what you want to know. You need to be willing to listen to what He has to say to you.

More often than not, we don't approach our Lord in this manner. We all know someone that tries to tell us something, but we really don't want to hear them. We have learned how to tune them out, because we don't want to hear it, so even when we did hear the person, we really didn't listen. That's how we all too often approach God's Word. We'll listen when it's convenient. We'll listen when we have the energy. We'll listen when we want to. But when God's Word tells us something that we don't want to hear; that we don't want to believe, then we somehow have trained ourselves to sleepwalk through it as if God never said it or as if He really wasn't talking to us. In reality, the problem is that we don't like to

hear God talk about our sins. We don't like to hear about a holy God who punishes sins. So many people don't listen to it. They go to places that only talk about how special they are and how important they are. They gloss over the Bible parts that talk about sin and punishment and perfection and hell. It's no different than the Jews who approached Jesus with their own agenda. It doesn't work that way. If you're really a sheep, you need to be willing to really listen to what Christ has to say about Himself and about YOU, no matter what it is. You can't open up the Bible and say, "I will only believe what agrees with me." That's not the sign of a true sheep.

Throughout the Scriptures there are examples of some people who truly did come to listen to what Jesus had to say. The rich young ruler is one example. With some background in the Word of God - he felt like he was on the right path. In his mind, he had been an obedient son. He hadn't committed adultery with anyone, murdered anyone, or stole anyone's property. Yet he still didn't quite feel confident that he was on the right path. So he came to Jesus and asked him, "good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18) He really wanted to know, for he came to listen. He also heard what Jesus had to say for it was loud and clear. Jesus said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Lk 18:22) The rich young ruler heard what Jesus had to say, but it was too difficult. So what did he do? At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Mk 10:22) The young man was willing to listen, but not to follow. This is the second sign of a true sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Psalm 23 shows us a picture of the Good Shepherd leading his sheep into green pastures with running water. It's such a tranquil scene. But following the Shepherd isn't always such an easy assignment. Look at the history of the Bible. God led the Israelites into a desert for 40 years. He led Paul on three missionary journeys, where he was shipwrecked, stoned, beaten and imprisoned. Psalm 23 has the Good Shepherd leading his sheep through the valley of the shadow of death. This isn't a good place for sheep to be traveling, not good at all.

The true sign of a sheep is one who is willing to follow, even through the valley of the shadow of death. Sheep are so trusting that they don't really think about where they're going. They're so enamored with their Shepherd's voice that they're willing to follow him ANYWHERE! Are you a sheep? Are you willing to follow?

So who is our Shepherd? Jesus says: “My Father has given them (the sheep) to me.” Being a part of Jesus’ flock isn’t dependent on what we do, but what the Father does. The sheep don’t find the shepherd; they are given to Jesus by the Father. Then Jesus points us to Himself, the Shepherd. The Good Shepherd has not only risked His life, but has given His life for us. The great message of salvation on this Sunday is that the Good Shepherd rescued us; not with a great display of power, but by becoming a weak and lowly, by becoming human just like us.

Jesus says to us, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep. (John 10:14-15)

Today, the Good Shepherd has another message for His sheep. He says, “I know you’re weak. I know you’re afraid to walk through that valley. I know it’s scary. But I want you to know something. I am your Shepherd. I have died for you. But now I am alive! I have risen from the dead, and I will give you eternal life, and you shall never perish; no one can snatch you out of my hand. My Father, who has given you to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch you out of my Father’s hand.” The strength of the sheep is not in their ability to hear or follow, but in the voice and leadership and the powerful hands of the Shepherd. Yes, we’re weak. Yes, we don’t follow as well as we should. Yet Jesus says to us, “come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest! I’ll lead you beside springs of living water!” That’s where He wants us to find our comfort.

Since Jesus is the Shepherd, He wants those who are willing to listen and follow wherever he tells to go. Whether you see yourself as a sheep or not, Jesus declares to you through faith in Him that you are His precious sheep, that He will never let go of. You are precious in his sight, so precious that He’ll never let go of you, His precious little lambs.

The resurrected Christ is our one true shepherd; the good shepherd spoken of by the psalmist, who leads God’s flock through fear and trials to rest beside still waters. Christ is the shepherd spoken of in John’s Gospel and in the book of Revelations; the one who leads God’s flock to springs of eternal life, and who wipes away every tear. Christ is our shepherd, and when we hear and follow the call of our shepherd, we belong to God’s flock. No one can snatch us from God’s hand. Amen!

A Mother's Day Prayer:

Dear Lord, Bless every mother and every grandmother with the finest of your spiritual blessings today. Confirm in her heart and spirit the work of her hands and the love that she has so freely given to those children under Your care. Validate her worth daily so she has no reason to doubt whether she is loved, valued, and cherished in the eyes of her Heavenly Father.

Create in her a deep sense of your protection and trust, so that worry and fear will disappear as she places her loved ones into Your care. Let her know that every prayer she has prayed and every encouraging word she has spoken on behalf of her children/grandchildren has been transformed into sweet, fragrant offerings before Your throne.

Whisper deep within her spirit the sweet words she longs to hear from You—that nothing can ever separate her from Your love. Help her to nestle daily into the promises of Your Word, standing with faith on the things You declare are true. Let her know that You reward faithfulness, but that true success doesn't lie in her accomplishments or accolades. Let her rest in the knowledge that she has done all she can—and that she and those she loves—truly belong to you. Bless her with a servant spirit so she can teach her own the joy of hearing one day, “Well done!”

Let her joy be contagious; let her passion be pure; and let her life overflow with all the blessings she deserves—on special days, and on every day of her life. In Jesus's name, Amen (Rebecca Barlow Jordan)

Benediction:

The Lord is our shepherd; we want for nothing.

We hunger and thirst no more.

The Lord gives rest and comfort to our souls.

God keeps us in perfect peace.

The Lord sustains us in the midst of trouble.

Our lives overflow with God's love and grace.

Goodness and mercy will surely follow us always.

And we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever! So go now with this knowledge and love one another. Amen!