

Easter #4

4-25-2021

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

Vicar Karen Pugatch

Celebrate (Introduction)

“The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, one of mutual knowledge and love that gives the shepherd authority. The shepherd’s willingness to lay down his life for the sheep shows his love. First John illustrates what it means to lay down our lives for one another by the example of sharing our wealth with any sibling in need.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Opening Hymn: [“Hallelujah! Jesus Lives!”](#)

Psalm: Psalm 23

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;

² he makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters;^[a]

³ he restores my soul.^[a]

He leads me in paths of righteousness^[a]
for his name’s sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,^[a]

I 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 my enemies;

thou anointest my head with oil,

my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely^[a] goodness and mercy^[a] shall follow me

all the days of my life;

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

for ever.”^[1]

Hymn of Praise: [“Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

1st Reading: [Acts 4:5-12](#)

2nd Reading: [1 John 3:16-24](#)

The Gospel: [John 10:11-18](#)

Hymn of the Day: [“The Lord’s My Shepherd”](#)

The Message: ([Video Link](#))

Today’s Gospel is the beloved lesson of the good shepherd. It is the story about the sacrifice which Jesus made so that we may know the essential truth of God’s love which gives hope and meaning to life. Jesus said “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” One may envision a shepherd and his flock as a serene and peaceful existence. At times, this could very well have been the case. But the truth is that life for the shepherd and his or her flock was always vulnerable to the dangers to be found in the world about them. This was especially true since sheep have little in the way of self- defense. At any time they could come face to face with dangerous wild animals and thieves. In protecting the sheep the shepherd needed to place his or her life in continual jeopardy.

With each new day, and especially each night, the shepherd never knew the perils which would face them. In many instances they had become so used to the reality of such a life that they not only always expected the next peril, but the life living amidst danger became normal for them. To the thief and the wild animals of prey the shepherd was seen as expendable and the object in the way of their prize. Even living under the threat of personal danger they still had to tend their flock with an almost devoted love for them.

In so many ways the shepherd’s life is being realized in today’s society which is becoming increasingly filled with dangers. We almost have come to the point of not only expecting dangers to happen each day but tragically they are becoming accepted as normal. The highly controversial English personality, Piers Morgan, recently addressed the U.S. about the frequent mass shootings, “Just admit you don’t care.” It is easy to understand such a statement as being the perspective of the outside world. We have done little or nothing in order to find answers to our society which is placing less and less value on human life unless it hits close to home. The value system and personal ideology for all too many has become one based upon economic gain, greed, and power regardless of who may be negatively affected.

Sadly this has become the gospel which is being preached and believed by many who call themselves Christian. Their gospel proclaims the reward for believing is economic gain and personal power. Their view of the good shepherd is seen in view of the economics involved. The good shepherd only saw the protection of his flock in order to not suffer economic loss. The thinking is that this is the only reason to ever place oneself in a possible sacrificial role. Jesus relates that this happened when the shepherd only had an economic interest. He stated, “The

hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away –and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.”

The good shepherd does just the opposite. “I am the good shepherd... And I lay down my life for the sheep.” In reality far too many believe that this concept of the good shepherd is seen as being a snowflake, weak, and irrelevant. They see love in terms of one’s egocentric world in which the self finds fulfillment no matter the negative affect it may have upon others. Seeing love in terms that may demand sacrifice is well beyond their ability to even consider. Everybody should sacrifice for them and their twisted, anti-social ideologies, and theologies and they never need to sacrifice.

John in his first letter, as read this morning, gives further insight into this great parable. He saw the good shepherd in further terms of sacrificial love. “We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another.” For John love is defined in terms of the resurrection and not in terms of self -fulfillment. The death and resurrection exemplifies the love of God and thus is the basis of Christianity. John emphasizes that we are to be that good shepherd and further defines this love as the love we must live in return. “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?” This lays bare those who adhere to the snowflake ideology. God’s love through the parable of the good shepherd and John’s words tells us that those who turn their backs upon their brothers and sisters in need and make up all kinds of excuses not to help, do not understand nor believe the message of the resurrection – the message of God’s love. Far too many within today’s society have twisted the meaning of “He is Risen!” and God’s love. They show their hypocrisy in their life’s actions in contrast to that which they profess to believe.

John again states, “Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” There is no way we can rationalize our way around it. The story and message of Jesus is that of love, sacrificial love, which gives of itself regardless of the price which may be paid. Everything that Jesus did and said exemplified this love. No matter where you turn in the gospels this love is on display, even if by displaying His love He violated the law of the scribes and Pharisees. Just look at the times He healed on the Sabbath, or ate with sinners, or talked with the outcast Samaritan women at the well, or touched the unclean leper while healing him. For any of these violations of the law he could have received the wrath of the authorities. He put His life on the line. In addition there were many times in which He sacrificed his time and even well-being in order to meet the needs of people who called upon him. Needless to say His sacrificial love is summed up in the cross. To say the least, love was just not a word glibly spoken but a lifetime endeavor.

It is this love, the love of the good shepherd, which we are called to live. To say the least living this love may not be the easiest road to travel for sacrifice by its very nature can be life changing. The difficulty is found in that this love knows no boundaries. He did not give His life just for the elite few in the house of Israel. He did not give His life just for His followers. He did not give His

life just for the beautiful people. He proclaimed: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd." Jesus gave a radical view of God's love. God's chosen were not just of the house of Israel but were all of mankind. The love of the Good Shepherd could not be limited. God's love was and is for everybody. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, saw that there were other sheep that also needed His saving message beyond the limited confined sheep of just one fold or flock. They needed to be brought into His flock in order to receive the love of His Shepherding. His love would then protect and give life to all who would follow Him. It would be the love of all God's children for which Jesus would lay down His life.

It is so easy to see the job description of Christianity to be the seeking of the paycheck, eternal life, God's ultimate gift of grace, without first turning our lives over to living this overwhelming love. It is so easy to fool ourselves by talking the talk of love without walking the walk of this love. In doing this we only deceived ourselves if we think we are a vital part of His flock. It is so easy to disillusion ourselves in believing we are safe and secure within the fold of the Good Shepherd when we deliberately wander astray following our own wanderlusts. It is so easy to deceive ourselves by thinking we are His followers when we do not extend this love of God by actively loving our brothers and sisters.

We are all called not only to be the sheep of His flock but we are also called to live the example of the Good Shepherd. We are called to live the life of the love of the Good Shepherd. We are called to be shepherds ourselves. In answering that call we will begin to realize God's grace. We realize the joy and comfort of the Good News. We know and experience the fact that God dwells within us and as such gives us the joy of new life every day. John states: "And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us." As a member of the fold this Spirit cannot be hidden but will be seen as we live the example of the Good Shepherd. In following the Good Shepherd we too are a loving shepherd of God's children. This leads us to the greener pastures of God's eternal love.

Anthem: ["The King of Love My Shepherd Is"](#)

Offering*: [\(On-Line giving Link\)](#)

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

The Prayer

Our loving Father, life is filled with surprise, some which we welcome and others present problems and are unwanted. Unfortunately our society has problems which present dangers to our very existence. Help us to see through the many obstructions which keep us from finding solutions which will bring hope and life to all. Give us the wisdom and understanding to follow your lead of love in our endeavors to overcome that which brings inequality, injustice, and divisiveness. Enter the hearts and minds of those who have not received their vaccinations

because of often ill-founded ideologies. Continue to comfort and bring healing to those who may have contracted this deadly disease.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, the Elshafei family, the Fultz family, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family,, Della , Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Wyatt Lee Wolf, Pastor Jack,
We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine upon you;
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters
Live on knowing God's love,
The joy of living this life of love,
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

Closing Hymn: ["Savior Like a Shepherd Lead Us"](#)

Announcement

In person worship services have begun, 9:30am. Services will be outdoors unless inclement weather conditions which then we will be indoors. Face masks and social distancing both indoors and outdoors will be required. An email will be sent late Saturday afternoons stating whether indoors or outdoors.

*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill
10274 Raleigh Tavern Road
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church
9122 Sybert Drive
Columbia Hills
Ellicott City, MD 21043

<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291