

SA, SL, TS and DSM United Churches

Fourth Sunday of Easter – April 21st, 2024

Prelude: - Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Thank you for your support of all our services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca .

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: In this time of worship and throughout our lives, we call on God.

People: In moments when we search for the power to act justly, let us do so in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Eric: In situations when our lips long for powerful words to speak, let us do so in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

People: At times when we feel lost and need to find the power to follow, let us do so in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Eric: When it is easier to hate, and we desperately need the power to love, let us do so in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

People: God offers salvation, transformation, solace, and refuge.

Eric: In it, we obtain the power to act, the power to speak, the power to follow, and the power to love.

People: In all we do and all we say, let us do so in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Eric: Come, let us worship.

Opening Hymn: VU 747 “The Lord is My Shepherd”

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me,
the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again;
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
even for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for thou art with me; and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.

My table thou has furnished
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me,
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling-place shall be.

Opening Prayer:

Loving and living God, we gather together today, guided by you, our Shepherd. You protect and care for us; you lead us as we journey through life. During this time of worship, we ask that our ears are open to hear your word, our eyes are open to see your light, our hearts are open to feel your love. As your sheep, we know love, and we have heard the commandment to love one another. May our worship be a testament to your love and our dedication to love one another. Amen.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: "Jesus Love Me, This I Know"

Jesus loves me, this I know,
for the Bible tells me so;
little ones to him belong,
they are weak, but he is strong.

*Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

Jesus loves me, still today,
Walking with me on my way,
Wanting as a friend to give,
Light and love to all who live.

*Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

Jesus loves me he will stay,
Close beside me all the way,
Thou has bled and died for me,
I will hence, live for Thee.

*Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so.*

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 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. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Scripture: John 10: 11 - 18

I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep. Hired workers are not like the shepherd. They don't own the sheep, and when they see a wolf coming, they run off and leave the sheep. Then the wolf attacks and scatters the flock. Hired workers run away because they don't care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me. Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father, and I give up my life for my sheep. I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must also bring them together, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd. The Father loves me, because I give up my life, so I may receive it back again. No one takes my life from me. I give it up willingly! I have the power to give it up and the power to receive it back again, just as my Father commanded me to do.

Message: "Jesus Loves Us!"

Today our scriptures are all about the Good Shepherd, known as Jesus the Christ. As our dialogue goes today, shepherds were a regular part of life in Jesus' day. Shepherds looked after their sheep in loving and caring ways, and the sheep would know and trust the shepherd. Jesus being known as the Good Shepherd would mean that we would know and trust Jesus and whatever Jesus asks us to do. Also this is a reminder to us, as we reflect that Jesus offered himself in love as a sacrifice for his flock – which we as Christians are part of. Being our Good Shepherd even the name of Jesus Christ holds power for us Christians.

We as Jesus' disciples understand that Jesus' power resides in love. The love of God through Jesus exerts influence in us and over us. In response, our call is to love - to exercise our power in acts of love towards one another. Together we Christians make a difference in today's world.

Today's Psalm reading is the 23rd Psalm, which is much-loved and undoubtedly one of the most well-known passages in the Bible. In the 23rd Psalm, the image of God as shepherd inspires trust and confidence, especially in times of life's uncertainties. Yet God being our shepherd does not deny those threats of troubles that disrupt our lives. When we encounter those times of troubles, may we remember God is our shepherd who never leaves us.

Although a shepherd may only be known to his or her sheep, Jesus as the Good Shepherd is known to all of humanity – whether they consider themselves Christians or not. Because Jesus is shepherd to all of humanity.

What does this mean for us today? How might we, individually and as a church, boldly enact the love of Jesus Christ in the neighbourhood, the community, the

world – to all the rest of humanity? This may tie into last week’s messages of us being a witness.

The Early Church, which we read about in Acts, had the overwhelming challenge of creating the story that continued after the life and death of Jesus. During this Easter season, we, too, are continuing our story. In celebrating the Resurrection, we find ourselves re-evaluating our own lives and asking “What happens now?”

Today I’d like to share with you a story a few years ago, when a large Atlanta church asked a retired 92 year old minister to preach from its pulpit. There was a warm welcome as the minister was introduced and, as the applause quieted down, the old man rose from his high back chair and walked slowly, with great effort to the podium.

Without a note or written paper of any kind, he placed both hands on the pulpit to steady himself and then quietly and slowly he began to speak.

"When I was asked to come here today and talk to you, your preacher asked me to tell you what was the greatest lesson I ever learned in my 50 odd years of preaching. I thought about it for a few days and boiled it down to just one thing that made the most difference in my life and sustained me through all my trials. The one thing that I could always rely on when tears and heart break and pain and fear and sorrow paralyzed me. The one thing that would comfort was this verse:

*"Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong, We are weak but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me... The Bible tells me so."*

When he finished, the church was so quiet you actually could hear his foot steps as he shuffled back to his chair.

When tears, heart break, pain, fear and / or sorrows paralyze you – remember the comfort in this verse:

*"Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong, We are weak but he is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me... The Bible tells me so."*

We are forgiven, we are cared for, we are loved – the Bible tells us so. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 331 “The Church’s One Foundation”

The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord;
we are his new creation by water and the Word;
from heaven he came and sought us that we might ever be
his living servant people, by his own death set free.

Called forth from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth;
one charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name professing and at one table fed,
to one hope always pressing, by Christ's own Spirit led.

Though with a scornful wonder the world sees us oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,
yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up, 'How long?'
But soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation, and tumult of our war,
we wait the consummation of peace forevermore;
till with the vision glorious our longing eyes are blest,
and the great church victorious shall be the church at rest.

We now on earth have union with God the Three in One,
and share through faith communion with those whose rest is won.
Oh, happy ones, and holy! Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly, on high may dwell with thee.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: To the one who has commanded us to love one another, we give thanks for the love we have received. In recognition of all we are given, let us now commit in love our giftings.

Offertory: VU 540 "Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving"

Grant us, God, the grace of giving,
with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.

Offertory Prayer:

People: God, we give you our thanks for all that we have and all we are. Let us offer our gifts and offerings in love, as we live love, in the name of the one who is love. Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: VU 665 "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour"

Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, hear my humble cry;
while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.
Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry;
while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.

Pastoral Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 344 "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds"

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

in a believer's ear!
It soothes the sorrows, heals the wounds,
and drives away all fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary, rest.

Dear Name! the rock on which I build,
my shield and hiding-place,
my never-failing treasury, filled
with boundless stores of grace.

Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.

The effort of my heart is weak,
and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see you whom I seek,
I'll praise you as I ought.

Blessing:

Eric: As we go, let us proclaim God is love. Go, knowing that you are loved by the Master of Love. As we are loved, may we share love with those in our lives, now and forever more.

Closing Chorus: "Go Now In Peace"

Go now in peace, never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.