

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Fourth Sunday of Easter – May 3rd, 2020

Prelude: “Jesus the Very Thought of Thee” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Welcome to our service on this Fourth Sunday of Easter. Today is considered to be “Good Shepherd” Sunday, reminding us of Jesus as the “Good Shepherd” in our lives and faith.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca.

We are blessed once again to have Christie Coatsworth offer the music for today’s service. Thank you Christie. Thank YOU to all the readers for reading and sharing the scriptures. We are planning the Mother’s Day service for next Sunday. We will be gathering by Zoom before the service, and I will have the printed copies and audio copies online at 9 am. I hope you can join us on such a special day. Mother’s Day will include communion – so join us with you cracker or bread and juice or wine.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

If you wish – grab a candle to use while we share these services. The flame of the Candle reminds us of the light of Christ that collects us as the faith community, “We are One in the Spirit”. Thanks be to God.

Call To Worship :

Eric: We gather here, listening for the voice of the giver and guardian of our lives.

People: **God comes to us as a good shepherd, calling us by name.**

Eric: We gather here, longing to follow in just paths of life.

People: **God comes to us as a good shepherd, leading us in right ways.**

Eric: We gather here to follow and praise God,

People: **whose good and steadfast love abounds all of our lives.**

Opening Prayer:

God, who calls us and leads us, we long to know your voice through thick and thin. We long to rest in your care for all of our needs. We hold out our hands as a sign of our desire to hear you and follow you. And we hold the hands of our neighbours, grateful that through them we also encounter you. Amen.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 118: 1 – 2, 19 – 29

Tell the Lord how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful.

Let Israel shout, “God is always merciful!”

Open the gates of justice! I will enter and tell the Lord how thankful I am.

Here is the gate of the Lord! Everyone who does right may enter this gate.

I praise the Lord for answering my prayers and saving me.

The stone that the builders tossed aside has now become the most important stone.

The Lord has done this, and it is amazing to us.

This day belongs to the Lord! Let's celebrate and be glad today.

We'll ask the Lord to save us! We'll sincerely ask the Lord to let us win.

God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord! We praise you from here in the house of the Lord.

The Lord is our God, and he has given us light! Start the celebration! March with palm branches all the way to the altar.

The Lord is my God! I will praise him and tell him how thankful I am.

Tell the Lord how thankful you are, because he is kind and always merciful.

Scripture: John 10: 1 - 10 *(By Jane Knister)*

Jesus said: I tell you for certain that only thieves and robbers climb over the fence instead of going in through the gate to the sheep pen. But the gatekeeper opens the gate for the shepherd, and he goes in through it. The sheep know their shepherd's voice. He calls each of them by name and leads them out.

When he has led out all of his sheep, he walks in front of them, and they follow, because they know his voice. The sheep will not follow strangers. They don't recognize a stranger's voice, and they run away.

Jesus told the people this story. But they did not understand what he was talking about.

Jesus said: I tell you for certain that I am the gate for the sheep. Everyone who came before me was a thief or a robber, and the sheep did not listen to any of them. I am the gate. All who come in through me will be saved. Through me they will come and go and find pasture.

A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest.

Reflection: "Living in Abundance"

An abundance of time was spent together by the growing community of Jesus' followers with much learning, praying, sharing of food and resources – all with sincere gratitude to God. They helped shepherd one another to walk in and make right paths for others to follow in the ways of life – shown to them by Jesus, also known as the "Good Shepherd".

Jesus talks about the robbers and thieves that climb over the fence, and I think of "a wolf in sheep's clothing". Maybe I watched too many of that cartoon where Ralph the wolf is always scamming the Sam the sheep dog to get at the sheep. When Ralph and Sam got to work, they would say hi to each other, and then punch

in on the time clock. Sam would head towards the sheep and Ralph the wolf would come up with tons of ideas on how to steal the sheep – which he never succeeded.

We in ministry circles talk about sheep stealing from our churches. At the Blenheim Ministerial, we talk light hearted about it, as we have folks coming and going all the time. Being a small community and with many of us being long term pastors we know who goes where and know when people are changing. I wonder if there are churches who are playing the “Ralph the Wolf” role by enticing church goers to come to their church? I hope if that happens that we play the role of “Sam the Sheepdog” and cut them off at the path. It’s an interesting concept that Jesus may be sharing in his talk today.

Yet we are all well aware of the abundance of church communities available to us. Communities which are God centered and provide an abundance of care and instruction. The gauge for me is whether the church you are involved in, actually helps you to strengthen your relationship with God, and with one another.

If we consider our church to be like the sheep pen, then the Shepherd uses the gate. The Shepherd does not climb over the fence to get inside. When the shepherd speaks, the sheep listen and follow. We know the voice of our Shepherd, and we will follow that voice.

Pastors are considered to be the shepherd of their flock. That is an extreme responsibility to place upon one person. Yet most pastors share the abundance of energy they experience as they share with their congregations. We also experience an abundance of energy as we work together as churches on big projects, such as the Christmas Baskets, Canada Day or the local food bank.

Pastors also share the abundance of faithful parishioners who help to share with ministry responsibilities, by leading church programs and helping by volunteering in the community, whether at Breakfast Programs or the Food Banks.

We as pastors and churches in the South Kent area are so blessed as we have an abundance of good people, faithful supporters, and great relationships with one another. We as churches can work together because the shepherd opens the gate and calls us by name. We can imagine that in Jesus’ day, several shepherds and several flocks were all housed in the same pen at night. In the morning in comes the shepherds and open the gates and lead their sheep out to new pastures. Each sheep follows its own shepherd, because they know the shepherd’s voice.

We are blessed in all the abundance we have, with all the abundance we share, and with all the abundance of care and concern that we have for one another. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

P.S. God is not done yet!

Song: VU 670 “Precious Lord, Take My Hand” – played by Christie Coatsworth

- 1 Precious Lord, take my hand,
lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
through the storm, through the night,
lead me on to the light:
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.
- 2 When my way grows drear,
precious Lord, linger near,
when my life is almost gone,
hear my cry, hear my call,
hold my hand lest I fall:
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.
- 3 When the darkness appears,
and the night draws near,
and the day is past and gone,
at the river I stand,
guide my feet, hold my hand:
take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

Offering:

Eric: At this point of time, we might not be able to physically place our money onto the offering plate. Each Sunday as we do give on the offering plate we give cash but we also give other gifts of ourselves. Please continue to support our ministries by sending your monthly cheques to your church treasurer. All the information to give is on our websites at southbuxton.ca and talbotstreet.ca.

Your gifts of yourselves are important in this time of uncertainty. Continue to share your much-needed gifts of compassion, empathy and love with each other. Continue to share our Spiritual gifts of prayer, of thought, and checking in with others. Please call your neighbours and friends; some are finding this time very lonely, some are hurting with job loss, and some by the lost of a cherished family member. We as followers of Jesus, in faith, continue to offer our help. Please consider increasing your offering and gifts – if you find you can. We do worship the God of abundance.

Let us take a moment to consider the gifts we may offer today, as we listen to “Jesus’ Hands Are Kind Hands”.

Offering Music: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offering Prayer:

O God, may these offerings of our money, possessions, time, and self be used to provide for the needs of your people. May they be a source of joyful testimony to you, your compassion, and your provision in our world. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

May we who are merely inconvenienced, remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk factors, remember those who are most vulnerable.
May we who have the luxury of working from home, remember those who must choose between preserving their health or paying their rent.
May we who have the flexibility to care for our children, when their schools close, remember those who have no options.
May we who have had to cancel our trips, remember those who have no place to go.
May we who are losing our investments, remember those who have no home.
As fear grips our country, let us choose love.
During this time, when we can not physically wrap our arms around each other, let us each find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors. Today we have done so with our donations to the Blenheim and Wheatley Food Banks. Thank you for those we have called this week and the conversations we have shared.

Let us think of others who have lost loved ones; we think of the Woudenberg family, as they say goodbye to Betty, and to the Armstrong family as they said goodbye to Annie, and for others who miss the companionship of someone during this time of isolation.

Today we pray for our front line workers and supporters. We thank them for all they have done and will continue to do until this pandemic is over.

We think of those in hospital and those who have need medical care – we think of Hunter Jane, of June and Ross, of Lyle and of Jack. We pray for Jeff in his Medical Journey and for Tom in his.

In the name of the risen Christ, we pray his special 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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.”*

Benediction:

Eric: May we go forth to follow Christ’s example of feeding the hungry, comforting those who mourn, being companions with those who suffer, and rejoicing in God’s abundant care. We go, never alone. God knows us and calls us by name, ever seeking us and receiving us home in love abounding, now and forever more.

Postlude: Hallelujah – Christie Coatsworth