



Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.trinitylutheran.ca

April 21, 2024
4th Sunday in Easter

Announcements

Trinity will offer a Sunday morning affirmation worship service to mark Pride Month on June 16. The service is intended to recognize the past wounds caused by the greater church on the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and to foster healing and belonging with the community. Assistant to the Bishop Adam Snook is scheduled to preach and assist at the service. A potluck follows the service

Trinity's music program continues to expand and our offerings diversify. Classical guitarist Esther Yang joins us on April 28. She is a third-year student in the University of Windsor music program.

Coming Services

May 12 - Music Sunday. The Trinity Band and choir will help lead the congregation in song as part of the Mother's Day service. As well, Trinity musicians and singers will provide liturgical music during portions of the service, such as the offering and communion.

May 15 - Pentecost Messy Church, 5 p.m. A mid-week session that includes a meal, activities and a devotional. All are welcome!

We Remember in our Prayers

In Residence: Cordelle, Dorothy, Katie, Margaret, Sharon, Vern.

Members: Bunny, Donna, Ed, Joan, Susan. Evelyn, Connie, Judith.

Friends & Family: Anna, Asdis, Audrey, Dot, Jean, Mary, Michelle, Randy, Roger, Rose, Frank

Introduction to the day

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.

Inshallah # 40 God welcomes all
ELW # 369 Christ the Lord is risen
today; Alleluiah!
ELW # 778 The Lord's my shepherd
ELW # 536 God be with you till we meet
again

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

First reading: Acts 4: 5-12

⁵The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you

crucified, whom God raised from the dead. ¹¹This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.'
¹²There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

Psalm 23

¹The Lord ¹ is my shepherd;
I shall not ¹ be in want.
²**The Lord makes me lie down ¹ in green pastures
and leads me be- ¹ side still waters.**
³You restore my ¹ soul, O Lord,
and guide me along right pathways ¹ for your name's sake.
⁴**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall ¹ fear no evil;
for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they ¹ comfort me.**
⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence ¹ of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is ¹ running over.
⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days ¹ of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the ¹ Lord forever.**

Second reading: 1 John 3: 16-24

¹⁶We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us—and we

ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How 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?

¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; ²²and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

²³And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

Gospel: John 10: 11-18

[Jesus said:] ¹¹"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The 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. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father

knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I 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. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."

Sermon

In the fold

There is a video of a stuck sheep cruising around the Internet. Actually, the Internet seems to be filled with videos of sheep being stuck in crevasses, trenches and ditches.

In one particular video, a man is struggling to pull the sheep free from the deep mud that holds it in place in a ditch.

After a few moments, the man pulls the sheep free ... lies it on the side of the ditch ... the sheep gets up ... jumps over a short fence ... and ambles into the pasture ... turns around and bounds back into the ditch a little farther down the way.

The man climbs out of the ditch ... looks at the sheep ... and walks away in frustration as the video ends.

The man doesn't act like a good shepherd ... and certainly doesn't seem to keep working to bring the sheep back into the fold.

Just before this morning's gospel passage from John, Jesus heals the man blind since birth.

Jesus spat on the ground ... mixed it into mud ... spread it on the man's eyes ... and told him to wash off the mud. When he does, the man's sight returns.

The Pharisees and religious authorities drive the man away after they question how and by whose hand his sight returned.

Jesus hears about what had happened and seeks the man out ... and tells him that his new sight allows him to see the world as it truly is ... to recognize that truth. Jesus tells him that while the relationship with the synagogue may be broken ... his spiritual sight makes the relationship with God deeper and stronger.

This sight brings him into the fold of followers.

Jesus' explanation of who responds to God's voice concludes in this morning's passage from John.

"I am the Good Shepherd..."

These are Jesus' first words that John shares with us this morning ...

The Good Shepherd addresses ... calls ... protects ... feeds ... and leads the flock back home to the pasture. The sheep ... in turn ... hear ... follow ... and benefit from knowing the shepherd's voice bringing them into community.

Since they know the shepherd's voice ... they come ... through the gate and into the pasture.

Within the pasture ... the flock is a community ... made up of different folds. The members of the folds forge bonds between one another.

Some studies have found that sheep have complex emotions. Members of the flock can feel afraid, angry, bored, sad, and happy. Sheep can be pessimists or optimists ... I guess viewing the pasture as half-empty or half-full.

What's more ... other sheep can recognize and respond to these emotions and traits. One member of the flock or fold can lead others to share the same emotion.

So, if one is scared ... the entire fold or flock can become scared. It's almost as if the flock were infected by a virus.

Of course, members of the flock also stay together for security from the things that can injure or attract members into dangerous or risky situations. But even gathering as a flock is no guarantee of safety.

If we look at the church as a flock, then the world's values and expectations are often at odds to what the flock holds to be true and can lure the members away.

Offering protection to the entire flock is the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd cares for the sheep ... feeds them ... protects them ... and goes to get them when they wander off ... whether it's a single sheep ... a group of 10 ... or an entire fold or flock ... the Good Shepherd works to bring them back to community ... calling them by name.

Even if the sheep keeps going back into danger ... seeks out the wrong things in life ... or acts in a way where grace is absent ... the Good Shepherd keeps calling them ... leading them back.

Jesus tells the disciples that the shepherd cares for the flock out of compassion and empathy ... out of love.

The shepherd is different than the hired hand who helps with the flock.

Hired hands do not love the flock ... they care for the flock because they are paid to do so ... there is some personal benefit for them helping with the flock.

Think of the man in the video ... walking away when the sheep ends up belly-deep in the muddy ditch.

The previous effort was enough ... now he leaves the sheep to its own devices. It could stay stuck in the mud ... away from the food in the pasture. You can imagine him grumbling, “I don’t get paid enough for this \$\$\$@!!” as he stomps off.

A good shepherd ... lower case ... is willing to sacrifice for the sheep ... just as Jesus the Good Shepherd ... upper case ... will lay down his life through the cross and tomb to save the world.

It is an expression of love that offers the gift of grace to the flock.

If disciples were to love one another as Jesus loved them ... then it means that they have to be willing to lay their lives for another.

Can we make that claim, as well?
Can we sacrifice our old lives for others?

John’s gospel passage invites us to consider how we express love for one another.

Do we love other members of the flock in a way that follows the lead of the Good Shepherd ... do we fully love in grace ... or are we selective in who is touched by the love we share?

Do we place conditions on the unconditional love we have received?

In our second reading this morning we heard the instruction to:
“let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.”

- 1 John 3: 18

For the writer of first John, love is not something to be described ... it is not some romantic notion with violins playing in the background.

In first John, love is an action ... it is a force to shape lives and the world.

Talk is cheap to the writer of John ... to pay love lip service ... cheapens it ... it cheapens grace ... because it allows grace to remain unfelt and unexperienced.

Grace calls us to work and to serve others ... to always have the love received in action.

Love ... then ... is to be anchored in truth ... *the Truth* ... not in personal desires ... not in ego ... or in a sense of self-importance or self-interest. Love for others is to be anchored in the good news that comes through the cross and empty tomb.

The truth of God so loved the world that the only son was given to save it.

Love then ... true love ... requires sacrifice. Something must be shed ... must be let go ... in order for love's effects to be truly life-giving and life-affirming.

First John and this morning's gospel lesson invites us ... calls us ... to consider how we love ... what we are willing to do for others ... what we are willing to sacrifice ... how much we are willing to sacrifice to save others.

What attitudes ... what self-entitlements ... what assumptions and values do we need to be let go in order for love to fully flow outward and ... just as importantly ... inward?

The gospel passage calls us to consider who we are in the flock ... are we the sheep that follow the Good Shepherd ... living into what we are called to do and serving who we are called to serve and love with no exception?

Or are we the members of a fold that follow the hired hands ... whose voices call us without knowing us?

Worse, are we hired hands ... doing ministry ... welcoming people into the fold ... only when there is a benefit to ourselves ... or when it is someone familiar?

And walking away when it seems like too difficult a job ... rather than as an expression of the abundant love we have received ... a love that calls us to let others know they are heard and known.

God calls us by name to know and experience love ... and because we were known before we knew ourselves

... God comes to us in our isolation and pain ... just as Jesus came to the man born blind when he was rejected ... God comes to us in compassion and love ... saving us through grace.

During this season of Easter ... with the empty tomb behind us ... let us love as we are called to love ... healing and comforting others ... fostering the belonging that so many yearn for ... and sharing the abundant life that comes through the Good Shepherd.

May we always be willing to work in the mud to be there for others who have become separated from flock ... even if they keep going back into that ditch.

May we love both in truth and in action ... this season and always.

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

Blessing

The God of all, who raised + Jesus from the dead, bless you by the power of the Holy Spirit to live in the new creation.

AMEN