

First Presbyterian Church- Rouses Point
Virtual Worship- May 3, 2020

Greeting:

Prayer of Preparation: Let us pray. Shepherding God, we thank you that you love those who remain close to you and those who stray, those who are always faithful and those who are not. Bless us, we pray. Help us to take a look at our lives and our relationship with you. Bring us close, draw us in, for it is the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

Call to Worship: The name of the Lord be praised. Let us turn to the Lord, seek his face, let us worship God, and gather around the table sets for us.

*Prayer of Confession:

Now, let us take hold of the gift Jesus offers and confess our sinfulness. Patient God, you know how easy it is for us to stray. We confess that we have not heeded your voice, calling us to follow the right paths, beckoning us to lie down and be restored; we have acted as if our salvation lies in busyness and control. Forgive us, we pray. Heal our brokenness and our fears. Remind us again that you lead us in gentle paths and by quiet waters; and when the paths are stony and the waves tumultuous, help us to remember your protection and your care. Help us to extend that same love and care to others, for we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen. Assurance of Pardon

Old Testament: Psalm 23

New Testament: John 10:1-11

Sermon "We Shall Not Want

*Affirmation of faith: Apostle's Creed

Prayers of the People:

Lord's Prayer

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Communion of the People

Prayer After Communion

Benediction

GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

L: Give thanks to the Lord, our God, for he is good.

P: His love is everlasting.

L: Almighty God, we give you thanks that you have formed the universe in your wisdom, and created all things by your power and will. Great and wonderful are your works.

P: Your ways are just and true. We praise you for the good gifts of bread and wine, and for the table spread as a sign of your love for all people in Christ.

L: With people of every time and place we lift our hearts in praise.

P: Holy, holy, holy, Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

L: Holy Father, we thank you for your Son Jesus, who lived with us, sharing joy and sorrow. He told your story, healed the sick, and was a friend of sinners. Obeying you, he took up his cross and was crucified by those whom he loved.

P: We praise you that he did not remain dead, but is risen to rule the world. He is still a friend of sinners.

L: We trust him, as our Good Shepherd to protect and guide us by overcoming every power to hurt or divide us, so that when you bring in your promised kingdom, we will celebrate victory with him.

P: Remembering the Lord Jesus, we break bread and share one cup, announcing his death for the sins of the world. And we proclaim his resurrection to all peoples and nations.

L: Great God, send your Holy Spirit in the breaking of this bread and the sharing of this cup, so that we might be drawn to Jesus and drawn together through him.

P: O God, who calls us from death to life, we give ourselves to you.

L: And with the Church through all ages we thank you for your saving love in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

A YOUNG PILOT, WHO HAD ONLY RECENTLY BEEN LICENSED TO FLY SOLO, WAS SEVERELY CHALLENGED BY BAD WEATHER AT THE AIRPORT WHERE HE PLANNED TO LAND.

HIS FIRST THOUGHT WAS TO SEEK ANOTHER LANDING PLACE FOR THE SMALL PLANE, BUT HIS FUEL WAS LOW, SO HE DECIDED HE SHOULD NOT RISK GOING FURTHER.

THE VISIBILITY WAS VERY POOR AS HE APPROACHED THE AIRPORT, SO HE HAD TO TRUST HIS INSTRUMENTS TO GUIDE HIM THROUGH THE DESCENT.

FORTUNATELY, AS SOON AS HE WAS NEAR ENOUGH TO HIS DESTINATION FOR RADIO CONTACT, AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER TOLD THE PILOT HE COULD NOT LAND YET.

AND WHEN HE WAS INSTRUCTED TO PUT THE PLANE INTO A HOLDING PATTERN, THE PILOT LET THE CONTROLLER KNOW HE WAS A NOVICE AND COULD USE SOME HELP.

FOR THE NEXT 45 MINUTES THE CONTROLLER GUIDED THE PILOT AS HE CIRCLED HIS PLANE AROUND THE AIRPORT, IN HEAVY FOG.

HE WAS PERIODICALLY GIVEN INSTRUCTIONS FOR COURSE AND ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENTS, TO SAFELY GUIDE THE PLANE UNTIL HE AS PERMITTED TO LAND IT.

THE HUMILITY OF THE PILOT IN ADMITTING HIS INEXPERIENCE, AND IN FOLLOWING THE VOICE OF THE CONTROLLER, WAS AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN ENABLING THE FLIGHT TO END SAFELY.

SOMETHING SIMILAR IS THE CASE WITH CHRISTIANS LISTENING TO JESUS, AND FOLLOWING THE TEACHINGS IN SCRIPTURE.

THE STORY OF THE PILOT COULD BE SEEN AS A CONTEMPORARY PARALLEL TO THE PARABLE OF THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP.

JESUS TAUGHT IN IT TRUSTING HIS VOICE IS IMPORTANT, MUCH LIKE THE PILOT HAD TO TRUST THE RADIO VOICE.

THERE ARE CHRISTIANS TODAY, WHO MAY BE MORE COMFORTABLE THINKING ABOUT THEMSELVES AS A PILOT WHO NEEDS SOME HELP, RATHER THAN A SHEEP.

SHEEP, AFTER ALL, HAVE A WELL EARNED REPUTATION FOR BEING ANIMALS OF LESSER INTELLIGENCE AND MORE FEARFULNESS THAN MANY OTHER ANIMALS.

ONE DEFINITION OF SHEEP FOUND IN THE WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY IS: "A PERSON WHO IS SILLY, STUPID, MEEK, TIMID, AND DEFENSELESS."

THINKING OF SHEEP IN THIS WAY MAY CAUSE MANY TO RESIST BEING CALLED BY THAT NAME.

HOWEVER, WE MIGHT ALSO WANT TO CONSIDER WHAT A BIBLE DICTIONARY SAYS CONCERNING SHEEP. IT SAYS SHEEP WERE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE ECONOMY AND CULTURE, AT THE TIME JESUS WALKED THE EARTH

INDEED, SHEEP HAD GREAT VALUE, SO THE METAPHOR WAS NOT INTENDED BY JESUS AS A PUT DOWN.

THERE IS ALSO THE FACT THAT INTIMACY OF RELATIONSHIP IS MUCH GREATER BETWEEN SHEEP AND THE SHEPHERD, THAN IT IS BETWEEN A PILOT AND AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER.

CONSEQUENTLY, THE METAPHOR OF SHEEP AND SHEPHERD IS ONE THAT EXPRESSES THE CLOSENESS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN US AND THE LORD, OUR SHEPHERD.

IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE THEREFORE, THAT WHEN JESUS WANTED TO TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS ROLE IN OUR LIVES HE DREW FROM THE FAMILIAR PASTORAL IMAGE.

JESUS WAS SAYING THAT HIS SOLE PURPOSE IS TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF BOTH THE FLOCK, AND INDIVIDUALS IN IT.

HE IS THE ONE WHO WILLINGLY LAID DOWN HIS LIFE, SO THAT ABUNDANT LIFE MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR HIS FLOCK; THAT IS FOR THOSE WHO PERMIT HIM TO BE THEIR SHEPHERD.

HIS PROMISE TO BE WITH US ALWAYS IS BASICALLY ABOUT OFFERING GUIDANCE, PROTECTION, AND COMPANIONSHIP.

SO LET US CONSIDER JESUS AS OUR GUIDE: HERE THE METAPHOR OF AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER AND AIRPLANE PILOT, CAN MERGE, TO SOME DEGREE, WITH THAT OF SHEPHERD AND SHEEP.

HOWEVER, WE SHOULD NOT OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT THE SHEPHERD OFFERS GUIDANCE CONTINUALLY, NOT JUST FOR A SPECIFIC NEED OR ONE TRIP.

WE CAN FIND ONE OF MANY UNDERSTANDINGS OF GOD'S GUIDING HAND AS SHEPHERD IN THE BIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE BENEDICTION IN HEBREWS 13:20-21 SAYS-

“NOW MAY THE GOD OF PEACE, WHO BROUGHT AGAIN FROM THE DEAD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE GREAT SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP, BY THE BLOOD OF THE ETERNAL COVENANT EQUIP YOU IN EVERY THING GOOD SO THAT YOU MAY DO HIS WILL....”

HERE IN THIS BLESSING, JESUS THE GREAT SHEPHERD, IS ALSO THE GATE THROUGH WHICH WE GAIN ENTRANCE TO A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

THIS IN TURN PROVIDES US WITH THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE AND GIFTS TO DO GOD'S WILL.

THIS PRAYER, ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIANS FACING STRUGGLES IN FAITH DUE TO PERSECUTION, FITS WELL INTO OUR CURRENT TIME.

IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC, WHICH THREATENS PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND SPIRITUAL WELL BEING WE ARE REMINDED THE SHEPHERD WILL GUIDE US AND EQUIP US TO COPE.

THE PROTECTION OF THE SHEPHERD INVOLVES PROVISION IN LIFE-FOOD, REFRESHMENT, REST, AND DEFENSE.

THE SHEPHERD'S ROD AND STAFF, CAN BOTH DEFEND AGAINST PREDATORS, AND PULL SHEEP BACK FROM DANGER OR STRAYING.

ONE WAY TO ENVISION THE VERSE IN THE PSALM- “YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES” IS- SHEEP FEEDING IN A PASTURE WITH A WOLF OR OTHER PREDATOR WATCHING BUT NOT ATTACKING FOR FEAR OF THE SHEPHERD.

IN REAL LIFE, HOWEVER, WE ARE NOT PROTECTED FROM ALL DANGER, SINCE WE STILL LIVE IN A WORLD WITH SEEN AND UNSEEN ENEMIES.

THE COVID-19 VIRUS HAS PROVEN THAT EVEN THE SAFEST PLACES IN THE WORLD CANNOT PREVENT IT FROM ATTACKING.

AND YET IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT WE ARE OFTEN PROTECTED FROM DANGER WE DO NOT EVER KNOW ABOUT.

JUST LIKE IN THE PSALM WE DO NOT NEED TO FEAR EVIL BECAUSE THE LORD IS WITH US, BOTH THROUGH THE DARK VALLEYS OF LIFE, AND IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

THE SAVIOR'S PRAYER FOR US FOUND IN JOHN 17:15 IS ONE WAY JESUS TAKES CARE OF US: “I AM NOT ASKING YOU TO TAKE THEM FROM THE WORLD, BUT TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE EVIL ONE.”

SPIRITUAL PROTECTION FOR CHRISTIANS IS AS MUCH A NECESSITY FOR ABUNDANT LIFE AS IS PHYSICAL.

2 THESSALONIANS 3:3 PROMISES: “THE LORD IS FAITHFUL, HE WILL STRENGTHEN YOU AND GUARD YOU FROM THE EVIL ONE.”

THIS IS ONE WAY WE SHALL NOT WANT, BECAUSE THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD.

THE COMPANIONSHIP OUR GOOD SHEPHERD PROVIDES IS THE FINAL BLESSING OF OUR RELATIONSHIP AS SHEEP TO THE SHEPHERD WE WILL LOOK AT TODAY.

IT IS THE MOST INTIMATE PART OF THIS RELATIONSHIP. THE COMPANIONSHIP OF OUR SAVIOR IS ESPECIALLY NEEDED BY MANY TODAY.

SOME OF US ARE ALONE AND LONELY, BECAUSE WE HAVE NO FACE TO FACE CONTACT WITH OTHER PEOPLE.

OTHERS ARE WITH FAMILY IN TENSE OR DANGEROUS CONDITIONS, WHICH CREATES A DIFFERENT KIND OF LONELINESS.

STILL OTHERS MISS THE ABILITY TO MEET IN PERSON WITH OTHER FAMILY OR FRIENDS, WHICH IS A THIRD WAY WE ARE LONELY.

BUT FOR US ALL THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD, HE IS WITH US ALWAYS, JUST AS JESUS PROMISED HE WOULD BE.

TRULY, THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF PSALM 23 AND JOHN 10 IS NOT TO SAY PEOPLE ARE SHEEP, BUT RATHER IT IS ABOUT A SPECIAL TYPE OF COMPANIONSHIP.

BOTH SCRIPTURE PASSAGES OFFER AN UNDERSTANDING, AND A VISUAL IMAGE OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE WITH US.

JOHN 10:14 OFFERS A SUMMARY OF WHAT COMES BEFORE IN THE GOSPEL PASSAGE.

JESUS SAYS: "I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD, I KNOW MY SHEEP, AND MY SHEEP KNOW ME."

THE WORD "KNOW" WARRANTS SOME ATTENTION. IT'S MEANING IS NOT INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE.

KNOWING IN THAT WAY MEANS TO KNOW FACTS AND FIGURES. FOR EXAMPLE WE CAN KNOW A WHERE SOMEONE LIVES, HOW THEY DRESS, LIKES AND DISLIKES, FAMILY INFORMATION AND PERSONALITY TRAITS.

JESUS, HOWEVER IS SPEAKING HERE ABOUT A DIFFERENT KIND OF KNOWING, WHICH IS EXPERIENTIAL AND RELATIONAL NOT JUST FACTUAL OR INFORMATIONAL.

THE KIND OF KNOWING DESCRIBED IN THE PSALM AND THE GOSPEL PASSAGE IS THIS SECOND TYPE.

WHEN DAVID SPEAKS ABOUT GOD IN THE PSALM HIS WORDS ARE NOT A THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT BUT A DESCRIPTION OF HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH THE LORD.

THINK ABOUT IT: THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM IS OFTEN READ FOR SOMEONE WHO IS DYING OR AT THE SERVICE AFTER DEATH.

ITS WORDS PROVIDE BOTH COMFORT AND HOPE TO MANY IN A TIME OF LOSS AND GRIEF.

HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THIS PSALM IS MORE ABOUT LIFE THAN DEATH.

IT IS ABOUT GUIDANCE, PROVISION, AND COMPANIONSHIP DURING THE WHOLE JOURNEY AND NOT JUST AT ITS END.

THE DEEPEST MESSAGE OF THE PSALM IS THAT THE COMPANIONSHIP OF THE LORD WHO IS OUR SHEPHERD TRANSFORMS EVERY SITUATION.

SCRIPTURE PROVIDES AN ABUNDANCE OF EXAMPLES OF HOW THE LORD JESUS IS OUR SHEPHERD.

EACH OF THESE VERSES REVEAL WAYS IN WHICH CHRIST'S RELATIONSHIP WITH US TRANSFORMS LIFE ITSELF.

FOR EXAMPLE, HERE IS AN ADAPTATION OF A REFLECTION BY REV. WILLIAM JONES, ABOUT THE SHEPHERDING PROVISION OF JESUS DRAWN FROM BIBLE PASSAGES.

THE VERSES FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON REASONS WE "SHALL NOT WANT", BECAUSE JESUS IS OUR SHEPHERD.

WHILE WRITTEN IN THE FIRST PERSON, IT APPLIES TO BOTH INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS, AND THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

THE REFLECTION BEGINS WITH THE BLESSING OF JESUS AS OUR SHEPHERD TAKEN FROM CHAPTER TEN OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

“I SHALL NOT WANT, FOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS MY GOOD SHEPHERD, FROM WHOM I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED.

I SHALL NOT WANT, FOR I MAY COME TO HIM AND CAST ALL MY ANXIETY ON HIM, FOR HE CARES FOR ME.-1 PETER 5:7

I SHALL NOT WANT, FOR I KNOW WHOM I BELIEVED AND AM PERSUADED THAT HE IS ABLE TO GUARD WHAT I HAVE ENTRUSTED TO HIM. 2 TIMOTHY 1:12

I SHALL NOT WANT, FOR I AM PERSUADED THAT....NOTHING IN ALL OF CREATION CAN SEPARATE ME FROM THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. ROMANS 8:38-39

I SHALL NOT WANT, FOR MY SHEPHERD BIDS ME COME SAYING ‘TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.’ MATTHEW 11:29-30

I SHALL NOT WANT, FOR THE LIFE I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME. GALATIANS 2:20

I SHALL NOT WANT, FOR BY GRACE I HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH, THIS IS NOT OF MYSELF, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD. EPHESIANS 2:8 ”

IN CONCLUSION WE CAN REJOICE EVEN IN THESE TIMES BECAUSE JESUS LOVES US-YOUNG, OLD, AND IN BETWEEN.

HE IS OUR BELOVED SAVIOR, FRIEND, AND SHEPHERD ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES, AND THROUGH HIM WE ARE GIVEN THE GIFT OF HAVING A HOME IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD: FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT, NOW--AND FOREVER. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY- PSALM 23 & JOHN 10:1-11

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