

Easter #4
5-3-2020
J.V.Trautwein

Celebrate (Introduction)

“Today is sometimes called Good Shepherd Sunday. Jesus is called the ‘gate’ of the sheep in today’s gospel. The risen Christ opens the way to abundant life. He anoints our heads with oil and guides us beside the still waters of our baptism. Each Sunday he spreads a feast before us amid the world’s violence and war (the crisis of a pandemic). We go forth to be signs of the resurrection and extend God’s tender care to all generations.”

Opening Hymn [“Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty”](#)

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.^[b]

He leads me in right paths^[c]

for his name’s sake.

⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,^[d]

I fear no evil;

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff—

they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely^[e] goodness and mercy^[f] shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

my whole life long.^[g]

Hymn of Praise: [“Beautiful Savior”](#)

Prayer of the Day

“O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death. Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One Good, now and forever. Amen

1st Reading: [Acts: 2:42-47](#)

2nd Reading: [1 Peter 2:19-25](#)

The Gospel: [John 10:1-10](#)

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

The Message ([Video Link](#))

The gospel lesson today is the familiar story about sheep and the gate keeper. Within our contemporary society, sheep and shepherding are foreign to our lives. Therefore, this story may not take on its full meaning for us. This being said, it is very interesting that every year there is a sheep and wool festival here in Howard County. To my surprise it is a very popular event featuring sheep and everything to do with them especially their wool and woolen products. Vendor after vendor exhibits and sells everything about sheep. Still, we know very little about this animal in our society compared to other people around the world. I will include myself in this category, even though I grew-up in the midst of my family farm which always had several sheep. They were there to keep the growth down from a field which cows once grazed. But more important was the wool they produced. My most vivid memory of these sheep was when my great uncle had them sheered. It is no wonder that we know little about this animal. Out of a worldwide population of 1.2 billion sheep, the United State is home to only five and a third million and have been on a dramatic and steady decline since the end of WWII.

Sheep are generally considered to be somewhat dumb and defenseless. As far as being defenseless that may be partially true but don’t let them butt you or be in the way of their powerful kick. As far as being dumb that is not true. They are actually a smart animal which can detect faces and voices even though separated from them for several years. They can even navigate complex mazes. It is important to note that they develop very strong bonds among themselves and look out for one another and will defend another against an enemy when attacked. I guess we can look to the sheep to reinforce the motivation to help us to help each other especially in these trying times.

It must be noted that within ancient societies sheep were a very valuable commodity not only for a source of food but for its wool. The shepherd, though low on the social and economic ladder, had the important job of keeping the owners valuable sheep safe. Since the darkness of night presented much danger to the sheep from predators and thieves, they were herded into pens or sheepfolds for the night. This kept the sheep from wandering away and discouraged predators from stealing them. The only entrance was through one gateway. The gate keeper for the night slept lying across that gateway. In order to enter or exit you had to get past the gatekeeper.

Jesus said, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them.” It is He who protects the sheep, that is we, during the dangers of life’s dark times. He continued, “I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.” Jesus is the gatekeeper who not only protects us but shows us the way out of the darkness into the light of each new day. It is through Him that we find comfort and safety during the trials of life such as this pandemic and gives us the hope and promise that we will find the joy of each new day.

During these days of uncertainty and trial there are those, and will continue to be those, with questionable motives who may want to lead us or others into perhaps the dangers of the unknown. We must be on our guard and ask ourselves if the motivation is not out of the love for others then we may be asked to follow a false shepherd who will lead us to an outcome that we may not desire. In doing so the sacrifices we have made may be for naught. It is the wisdom of love that will lead us to make the decisions which bring life and well-being to all our brothers and sisters. We are told, "The thief comes to steal and kill and destroy." But Jesus said. "I came that they may have life, and have it more abundantly." Peter stated it this way, "But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it you have God's approval."

Today the quandary is that people are not only suffering from this terrible, highly contagious virus but there are also those suffering real economic hardships. The result is that answers may become difficult to find. Answers just may work against one problem or the other. It almost seems to be a "Catch 22" situation. Lives and well-being are at stake in either case. It is during times like this that we need to pray for the wisdom of God's love to take control. Love just may demand more sacrifices so others may live. That is when we will realize the light of a new day and a new life. In doing this we realize the Psalmist words, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside stilted waters. You restore my soul, O Lord, and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake." The wisdom of His love through the resurrected Jesus gives us this hope for He said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." The question then becomes do we believe this?

The Anthem: ["We Come This Far By Faith"](#) The Morgan State University Choir

We've come this far by faith
Leaning on the LORD
Trusting in His Holy Word
He never failed me yet
Oh' can't turn around
We've come this far by faith
(Repeat)

Verse

Don't be discouraged
when trouble comes into your life
He will bear your burdens
And remove all our misery and strife
And that's why

Chorus

Just the other day
I heard a man say

He didn't believe in God's words
But I can truly say the lord will make a way
Because he, he never failed me yet.

Chorus

The Offering*

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:

God of all love and wisdom, during this time of an ever spreading pandemic, we need the guidance which only you can provide. We know that your loving presence will make the difference as to how we face the decisions which need to be made. You are our shepherd and we need the wisdom and strength of conviction to follow your path to overcome these difficult times. Comfort us while we remain in a state of social distancing and isolation. We pray for the safety and well-being of those treating the sick and dying. May we be arms of relief to those who are jobless and in economic hardship. Also comfort and ease the anxiety among our children and young people. Be especially near to those young people who are missing their senior year activities. May we always realize the blessings which we have every day.

We especially seek healing and comfort for Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, Billy Jean Eddy & family, the Elshafei family, Betty Fultz, Darrell Garrison, the John Family, Robert Karner, Ray Lambert, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Nic Nelson, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Terre Rones, Paul Sagal, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Tommy Shimer, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Randy Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

The Lord's Prayer: Andrea Bocelli <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aEplqV0scyo>

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 come 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"](#)

*Offering to be sent to:

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