

ST. MARGARET OF SCOTLAND ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Sunday, April 25th, 2021

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 25, 2021

11:00 a.m. Morning Prayer

OPENING HYMN

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

People: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Celebrant: Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

People: He gave us new life and hope by raising Jesus from the dead.

Celebrant: Rejoice, then, even in your distress.

People: We shall be counted worthy when Christ appears.

Celebrant: God has claimed us as his own.

People: He called us from our darkness into the light of his day.

Celebrant: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

People: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

I am the good shepherd, says the Lord: I know my own and my own know me. John 10.14

VENITE

PSALM 95.1–7

Celebrant: Come, let us sing to the Lord;

People: let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

Celebrant: Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving

People: and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

Celebrant: For the Lord is a great God,

People: and a great king above all gods.

Celebrant: In his hand are the caverns of the earth,

People: and the heights of the hills are his also.

Celebrant: The sea is his for he made it,

People: and his hands have moulded the dry land.

Celebrant: Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee,

People: and kneel before the Lord our maker.

Celebrant: For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.

People: Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

THE PSALMS

PSALM 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

People: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now and will be for ever. Amen.

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

THE READINGS

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS 4:5-12

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, let 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. This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

The word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

A READING FROM THE FIRST BOOK OF JOHN 3:16-24

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us--and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How 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? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

And 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. All 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.

People: Thanks be to God.

THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO JOHN (10:11-18)

People: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The 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. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.

I 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. For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in-order to take it up again. No 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."

The Gospel of Christ.

People: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION

WHAT'S IT WORTH?

There are two images that the listeners to Jesus' claim to be the "good shepherd" may have had in mind when he spoke to them – the first was of the relationship that a shepherd had to his/her sheep and the second was this sense of inversion that Jesus presents of a shepherd who gives his life for the sheep.

The first image plays on something that may seem a little too familiar to many of us of the nature of the intimate relationship that a shepherd had with his or her sheep in Biblical times. As I pointed out a few weeks ago, this extensive illustration by Jesus in John 10 pulls out some key characteristics that listeners would have been familiar with about keeping sheep – from the shepherd acting as a "gate" or "door" to a sheep enclosure at night, as the recognised voice that the sheep follow to the defender of sheep. Each of them plays on a particular idea of shepherding and emphasise the quality of the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep as well as the willingness of the shepherd to give to the sheep in a self-sacrificing manner.

Here Jesus picks up on an image all too familiar to his listeners of the "good shepherd" David who takes on Goliath based upon his experience of protecting his sheep from lions and bears. The true measure of a "good shepherd" – in contrast to a hired hand – is that the "good shepherd" is willing to stay and face whatever danger comes his or her way in-order to defend the sheep. But Jesus, in-reference to his own passion, takes the imagery one step further, by suggesting that the "good shepherd" is so willing to defend the sheep even to the point of death. To give self-sacrificially for the safety of his or her flock.

But secondly, this imagery would seem so contradictory to Hebrew religious practice because it was ultimately sheep who gave of themselves sacrificially in Temple worship on behalf of humanity. It is they who were called on to act sacrificially for the benefit of humans and not the other way around. It was their sacredness – their very life – that was on offer for the sacred benefit of humanity.

That it is just as much our reality when we use plants or animals for the benefit of ourselves today. All sorts of living things – including plants and animals - give up life that we might have life. All sorts of living organisms give up their existence so that we may continue to exist – which is why mass consumerism is the sin of removing the sacredness of life from consumption. The more attached we are to where our food comes from, the more we realise the sacredness involved in what we eat – the giving up of life that others may live - that is inherent in the existence of all things.

Here, in contrast to Hebrew religious practice of sacrifice associated with the Temple, is the Good Shepherd who gives of himself sacrificially for the benefit of the sheep. While we might be comfortable with the idea of substitution when we talk of Christ as the Lamb of God who gives himself for the sin of the humanity in the stead of sheep or cattle or doves, Jesus is taking this one step further by suggesting that he is the “good shepherd” who gives himself on behalf of the sheep themselves. This is a complete inversion that emphasises not only the generosity of God, but also the significant value of the “sheep” to the shepherd.

Repeatedly, Jesus flips or inverts reality in-order to show the profound generosity of God towards humanity and creation. As is true in Psalm 23 and so many of Jesus parables, like the lost sheep and the lost son and the lost coin, the emphasis of understanding is on a God who is generous to the point of being ridiculous. Here again, Jesus makes the same point – God in Christ over-gives in generosity through self-sacrifice that would seem excessive. Here is a shepherd who, in contrast to the hired hand, has such a strong affinity to his sheep that he would even be willing to die for them and their wellbeing. How bizarre when we assume in terms of religious practice it is meant to be the opposite of that.

But the point that Jesus is making is not simply about the generosity of God, but also of the value of the sheep to the shepherd who loves. And that worth is defined relationally - “I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father” – and put on par with the nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son in the divine community of the Trinity. This is a shepherd who loves the sheep in the same qualitative way that the Father loves him – with profound generosity – and in that is the valuing of the sacredness of life.

People: Amen

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The Nicene Creed

Celebrant: Let us confess our faith, as we say,

People: **We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father.

With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.

He has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

INTERCESSIONS AND THANKSGIVINGS

#15 EASTER

(In joy and hope let us pray to the source of all life, saying, "Hear us, Lord of glory!")

Celebrant: That our risen Saviour may fill us with the joy of his holy and life-giving resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Hear us, Lord of glory!**

Celebrant: That isolated and persecuted churches may find fresh strength in the Easter gospel, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Hear us, Lord of glory!**

Celebrant: That he may grant us humility to be subject to one another in Christian love, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Hear us, Lord of glory!**

Celebrant: That he may provide for those who lack food, work, or shelter, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Hear us, Lord of glory!**

Celebrant: That by his power wars and famine may cease through all the earth, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Hear us, Lord of glory!**

Celebrant: That he may reveal the light of his presence to the sick, the weak, and the dying, that they may be comforted and strengthened, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Hear us, Lord of glory!**

Celebrant: That he may send the fire of the Holy Spirit upon his people, that we may bear faithful witness to his resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

People: **Hear us, Lord of glory!**

Shepherd of all, by laying down your life for your flock you reveal your love for all. Lead us from the place of death to the place of abundant life, that guided by your care for us, we may rightly offer our lives in love for you and our neighbors.

People: **Amen.**

The Collect

O God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make us perfect in every good work to do your will, and work in us that which is well-pleasing in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

People: **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Celebrant: And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

People: **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, for ever and ever. Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Celebrant: Let us bless the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

NOTICES

BLESSING:

Celebrant: The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favour and grant us peace.

People: **Amen.**

Closing Hymn

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Assisting Rev. Simon today:

Celebrant/Preacher: The Rev. Simon Bell

Video: Simon Bell/David Paradis

This morning in our worship we remember in our prayers those of our family and friends who have immediate needs and concerns:

Kevin & Danielle Sullivan; Kim; Laura Johnston & Family; Jeremiah Sullivan; AJ; Dorothy & Chuck; People of St. Vincent; Carl; Mark & Erin; Amy Pauley & Family; Wendy; Adara; Jean Glionna; Sarah & Dee; Kaus; Brenda Jessem; Shirley; Bobby Paradis & Family; Marg Thomas & Family; Lyon's Family; Jodine; Lynda Raye; Frank Kilravey; Rhonda; Sherrie O.; Jane Tutty; Edison's Family & his Teacher who has Covid; Bill and Ann Canning; Tanya North; Brenda & Brian; Derek; Theresa & Pete; Jaxon Croft; Ron & Jane Lewis; Michelle & Ian Sinclair; Sean; Kevin H.; Sophia L; Amanda Stewart; Kathryn

The names below are people in need of ongoing prayers for various reasons so we ask you to please continue to pray for them and their continuing need of God's healing touch and grace:

Marilyn Foley; Kadeem Broomes; Diane M.; Bill Snow; Deborah Hall; Owen; Mark & Winnie; Staff and Residence at Roberta Place; Brian W.; Cecilia Mowat; Jen Galicinski; Sheri Scott; Arlene; Joan Gough; Lorraine W; Stephanie; Fr. Murray; Amy P. & Family; Marg Abbott; Livia & Neil Purcell; Jordan; Margie Mills; Eunice Merrett; Jean Wallace; Nancy Dodds; Lee & Jeannie Martin; Bill & Cathy Gray; Wendy Goodyer; Donna Wilson; Garn Mennell; Margaret & Gordon Kennedy; Paul & Rose McIntyre; Jim Tomkins; Do Saunders; Jefferson Jr.; June Osolin; Martin & Stephen Bertelsen; Tanya Wade-Vargas.

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

The Nippon Sei Ko Kai

In the Toronto Diocesan Cycle of Prayer we pray for:

Vocations for Religious Life and Ordained Ministry