

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church
A Family Connecting in Christ



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GOOD SHEPHERD SUNDAY

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday. These days we can be feeling torn in two different directions. On the one hand, we want to get up, and get out, and do. On the other hand, life can have us feeling broken and tangled and empty. Today, with our Good Shepherd, we see we have the God we need for our broken, tangled, and empty times. Not just so we can get up and get out for ourselves, but so we can live a life that shares the peace and shows the glory of our God!

OPENING HYMN

"At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing"
Hymn 141 (1-3)

At the Lamb's high feast we sing
Praise to our victorious King,
Who has washed us in the tide
Flowing from his piercéd side. Alleluia!

Mighty Victim from the sky,
Hell's fierce pow'rs beneath you lie.
You have conquered in the fight;
You have brought us life and light. Alleluia!

Now no more can death appall,
Now no more the grave enthrall;
You have opened paradise,
And your saints in you shall rise. Alleluia!

INVOCATION

M: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

CONFESSION

M: Dear friends, let us approach God with a true heart and confess our sins, asking him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive us.

C: **Lord of life, I confess that I am by nature dead in sin.**

For faithless worrying and selfish pride,

For sins of habit and sins of choice,

For the evil I have done and the good I have failed to do,

I deserve to be cast away from your presence forever.

O Lord, I am sorry for my sins. Forgive me, for Jesus' sake.

ABSOLUTION

M: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. In his great mercy, God made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our sins. Hear the word of Christ through his called servant:

I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY †

Kyrie

M: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

For the well-being of all people everywhere, that they may receive from you all they need to sustain body and life, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: For the spread of your life-giving gospel throughout the world, that all who are lost in sin may be brought to faith in you, hear our prayer, O Christ.

C: **Christ, have mercy.**

M: For patience and perseverance in this life, that we may not lose the hope of heaven as we await your return, hear our prayer, O Lord.

C: **Lord, have mercy.**

M: Lord of life, live in us that we may live for you.

C: **Amen.**

HYMN

"Easter Triumph, Easter Joy"

Hymn 141 (vs. 4-5)

Easter triumph, Easter joy!
This alone can sin destroy;
From sin's pow'r, Lord, set us free,
Newborn souls in you to be. Alleluia!

Father, who the crown shall give,
Savior, by whose death we live,
Spirit, guide through all our days,
Three in One, your name we praise. Alleluia!

PRAYER OF THE DAY (*Spoken together*)

O Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep. Lead us now to the still waters of your life-giving Word that we may abide in your Father's house forevermore; for you live and reign with him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

† Kyrie is the Greek word for Lord. The expression "Lord, have mercy" is one of the oldest worship responses in the Christian church.

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

Then one of the elders asked me, “These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?”

I answered, “Sir, you know.”

And he said, “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore,

“they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.
Never again will they hunger;
never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat upon them,
nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd;
he will lead them to springs of living water.
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want.
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; he leadeth me
The quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again
And me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness,
E'en for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear no ill;
For thou art with me, and thy rod
And staff me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnished
In presence of my foes;
My head thou dost with oil anoint,
And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy, all my life,
Shall surely follow me,
And in God's house forevermore
My dwelling-place shall be.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep 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 are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ...

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.”

CONFESSON OF FAITH

Psalm 23

**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will 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 love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"The King of Love my Shepherd Is"
Hymn 375

The King of love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness fails me never;
I nothing lack if I am his,
And he is mine forever.

Where streams of living water flow,
My Savior gently leads me,
And where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feeds me.

Confused and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love he sought me
And on his shoulder gently laid
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With you, dear Lord, beside me;
Your rod and staff my comfort still,
Your cross before to guide me.

You spread a table in my sight,
A banquet here bestowing;
Your oil of welcome, my delight;
My cup is overflowing!

And so through all the length of days
Your goodness fails me never.
Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise
Within your house forever!

SERMON

Hebrews 13:20-21

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul.” You know how it goes: “I will fear no evil. Your rod and your staff they comfort me.” So, are you feeling it? Do you feel rested, fearless, comforted? Like you have it made; like you’re set and ready for anything?

Or do you feel a tightness in your chest? That sometimes, it’s hard to breathe. A feeling that you cannot shake, a feeling that you’re missing something, that you should be doing something more, something different - and you just can’t?

I don’t know about you, but at home we’ve had some green pasture, quiet water time; and too much of that feeling of can’t, not being able, not being good enough. We’ve had some great devotions. We get to worship together, talk about grace and peace, the blessing of church, what a great church family we have here. We get to play some cards; Lisa beats me, and we still like each other. Life is good. But at the same time, some nights, I feel like someone has turned the crazy dream and nightmare switch on. And during the day, it seems like someone is hobbling all my computers and fast-forwarding all my clocks so I’m falling further and further behind on what I want to do.

Cooped up, what are we learning about ourselves? We want to do, don’t we? And I’m not just talking about getting back to baseball or soccer or going out to eat. I’m not just talking about entertaining ourselves or padding our nests, making life better for ourselves. I’m not just talking about what we want to do out in the world. I’m talking about what we want to do in the kingdom of God as the children of God. What do we want to do? In our cooped-up world, we want to make sure people are taken care of, don’t we? In our anxious, stressed-out world, we want to bring peace to anxious, stressed-out hearts. In our families, with our friends, for our neighbors, we want to help in a way that really matters, don’t we? There is so much we want to be able to do!

But we're cooped-up. Stressed. Stuck. Distracted. And sometimes, that's the way we want it, don't we? Why? Well, what if I reach out and they think I'm a bother? What if I reach out and I don't know what to say? What if I reach out and I can't help? But if I stay stuck and distracted? Then I don't have to worry about any of those other "what ifs," do I? Do you ever feel like that? Insufficient? Like you're not up to it? Like life expects too much? Like God expects too much?

Our lesson gives us an answer good for all of that, an answer better than staying stuck, an answer better than staying distracted. Our lesson is a prayer, a blessing; it's what God wants for us! **May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.** That's not just a prayer or a Bible wish; it's what God wants to do for you!

"May the God of peace equip you." Picture a broken arm dangling. I remember breaking my arm just below the shoulder; I tried to move it, but it just dangled. Do you ever feel broken like that, useless? **"May the God of peace equip you."** You have a God who wants to pull you together, hold you together, make you whole. Or picture a large fishing net, torn up, piled up, tangled up on shore. Do you ever feel like that - a tangled up, torn up mess? You have a God who wants to sit with you, sort with you, untangling your messes, tying together your loose ends, making you whole. Do you ever feel empty, running on empty, with nothing more to give? **"May the God of peace equip you."** You have a God who wants to fill you, fuel you, empower you to do the most amazing things - he wants to fill you, fuel you, empower you to work the love of God and to share the blessings of heaven.

That's what God wants to do for you. That's what God wants to work with you. Sounds good, doesn't it? But some days we might feel too empty, too tangled, too broken to think it possible. Some days we might feel that if anyone even hints we could be doing more, they must be cold and heartless. Remember who wants to work this with you - **"the God of peace."** You might have people

in your life trying to whip you into shape with snark and scowl and snarl, but that's not God's way. He's the God of peace.

Some people think that peace and grace can't do what needs to be done. Well, look what your God of peace has done - "[The] **God of peace, brought back from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus, through the blood of the eternal covenant.**" That's a mouthful, isn't it? That's such a mouthful, let's take some time to chew on it. Your God brought Jesus back from the dead! If your God can bring the dead to life - and he can! - dare to think what he could do for you; think what he could do for those around you. If he can raise the dead to life, what can't he do? What can't he do for you? What can't he do in you?

Back to what God has already done. Your God raised to life the Great Shepherd who gave his life for you! By his blood - take all your broken-ness, all your tangled messiness, all your emptiness - by his blood, Jesus paid the price for it all. By his blood, Jesus established and confirmed God's eternal covenant with you. In other words, he established and confirmed God's eternal promise to you - "[No matter how broken, no matter how tangled and torn, no matter how messy, no matter how empty you have been ... this is God's eternal promise to you:] **I will be [your] God and [you] will be my people. I will forgive [your] wickedness and remember [your] sins no more.**" Did you hear what God says to you there? "I will be your God and you will be my people. I will forgive you and remember your sins no longer." By the blood of the covenant, by Jesus' life and his death on the cross, you are set right with God. And Jesus? What Jesus did for us, as one of us, Jesus did for himself. By his blood, by his life and death, Jesus proved himself right with God, fit for life with God. That's why we have that strange, strange wording - God raised Jesus by his blood.

Think about what that gets to mean for you! Your Good Shepherd lives! The Good Shepherd who loves you so much he gave his life for you - he lives! The Good Shepherd who knows you and knows what you need - he lives and he's watching out for you! The Good Shepherd who promises eternal life to his sheep - he lives to keep his promise to you! And, yes, the Good Shepherd who called you to follow him - he lives and he is still calling you to follow him today.

So now what? Sit back, sit tight, and wait for God to do his thing in us? No, this is the "so now what" - we get after it! We know what God wants to do, we know what God wants to bless, so we get after it! Instead of letting ourselves get stuck and distracted, we keep our eyes and ears open - how can we be the hands and feet of God? We keep our eyes and ears open - how can we share the love of God? And as we step in, what do we get to know? God will step in with you!

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

HYMN

"My Shepherd Will Supply My Need"

Hymn 374

My shepherd will supply my need --
Jehovah is his name.
In pastures fresh he makes me feed
Beside the living stream.
He brings my wand'ring spirit back
When I forsake his ways
And leads me, for his mercy's sake,
In paths of truth and grace.

When I walk through the shades of death,
His presence is my stay;
One word of his supporting breath
Drives all my fears away.
His hand, in sight of all my foes,
Will still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows;
His oil anoints my head.

The sure provisions of my God
Attend me all my days;
Oh, may his house be my abode
And all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest
While others go and come,
No more a stranger or a guest
But like a child at home.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

- M: O Lord God, our strength, our song, and our salvation, you fulfilled your promises by the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.
- C: Thanks be to God! You give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- M: In your compassion you sent Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down his life to rescue the lost.
- C: Drive out all doubt and gloom that we may delight in your glorious triumph.**
- M: Lift our eyes heavenward to see him who lives to make intercession for the saints, and grant us confidence in the greatness of his power. Keep before us the vision of your redeemed people standing before your throne and singing the song of victory:
- C: Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive wisdom and power and honor and glory and praise.**
- M: Make us instruments of your peace as we bring the good news of hope and new life to those around us. Guide us in the use of all that you have entrusted to us: our time, our talents, and our treasures.
- C: Risen Lord, live in us that we may live for you.**

- M: Merciful Lord Jesus, grant healing to the sick, and strengthen the faith of the suffering and the dying. Assure them of your abiding presence, and comfort them with the hope of eternal life.
- C: **Alleluia! Thanks be to God! 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

Hebrews 13:20-21

- M: May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever.
- C: **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

"I Am Jesus' Little Lamb"
Hymn 432

I am Jesus' little lamb;
Ever glad at heart I am,
For my shepherd gently guides me
Knows my needs and well provides me,
Loves me ev'ry day the same,
Even calls me by my name.

Day by day, at home, away,
Jesus is my staff and stay.
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,
Into pleasant pastures leads me;
When I thirst, he bids me go
Where the quiet waters flow.

Who so happy as I am,
Even now the shepherd's lamb?
And when my short life is ended,
By his angel host attended,
He shall fold me to his breast,
There within his arms to rest.

OFFERING

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