

The FOURTH SUNDAY of EASTER, 2020
“Good Shepherd Sunday”

Virtual Grace

Organ Prelude - “*The King of Love my shepherd is*” *tune: St. Columba*
Hymn Prelude by Healy Willan (*Hymnal 1982, #645*)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hello and welcome to “Virtual Grace”
from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA.
I’m Fr. Ed, the rector of our parish.
When things settle down and we’re able to travel again,
we hope you might visit us in person.

Remember, if you are in any pastoral need at all, call me, 24/7.
No matter the virus, I am ready to come to your spiritual aid.
And if you are able, make your contributions - your offerings of sacrifice -
to the continued ministries of Grace Church.

Come now, and let us bless the Lord.
In the name of God the Creator, ✚ God the Sustainer, God who Sanctifies. Amen.

CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor:

God of all mercy, we confess that we have sinned against you,
opposing your will in our lives.
We have denied your goodness in each other,
in ourselves, and in the world you have created.
We repent of the evil that enslaves us, the evil we have done,
and the evil done on our behalf.
Forgive, restore, and strengthen us through our Savior Jesus Christ,
that we may abide in your love and serve only your will. Amen.

May Almighty God in mercy receive our confession of sorrow and of faith, strengthen us in all goodness, ☩ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep us in eternal life. Amen.

COLLECT

Let us pray:

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

CANTICLE - A SONG to the LAMB *Revelation 4:11, 5:9-10,13; BCP p.93*

Splendor and honor and kingly power are yours by right, O Lord our God,
For you created everything that is,
and by your will they were created and have their being;

And yours by right, O Lamb that was slain,
for with your blood you have redeemed for God,
From every family, language, people, and nation,
a kingdom of priests to serve our God.

And so, to him who sits upon the throne, and to Christ the Lamb,
Be worship and praise, dominion and splendor,
for ever and for evermore.

A reading from the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to St. John: *John 10: 11-16*

Jesus said, "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."

The Word of God.

Remembering these words, recite with me the famous words of the 23rd Psalm:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul;
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

MEDITATION

*Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep
And can't tell where to find them.
Leave them alone, And they'll come home,
Wagging their tails behind them"*

*Little Bo peep fell fast asleep
And dreamt she heard them bleating;
But when she awoke, she found it a joke,
For they were still a-fleeting.*

*Then up she took her little crook,
Determined her to find them;
She found them indeed, but it made her heart bleed,
For they'd left their tails behind them.*

*It happened one day, as Bo Peep did stray
Into a meadow hard by,
There she espied their tails side by side,
All hung on a tree to dry.*

*She heaved a sigh and wiped her eye,
And over the hillocks went ramblin',
And tried what she could, as a sheperdess should,
To tack each again to its lambkin.*

I couldn't resist a familiar nursery rhyme today,
as we consider Jesus the *Good Shepherd*.

Some will say that Bo Peep is instruction to the young about being responsible
and not falling asleep on the job.

Actually, I believe it's simply a story to explain why sheep don't have tails.

L. Frank Baum, of Wizard of Oz fame, wrote a final stanza along those lines:

*Little Bo-Peep no more did weep;
My tale of tails ends here.
Each cat has one,
But sheep have none.
(Which, after all, is queer!)*

I will take the side, today though, reprimanding Bo Peep for irresponsibility.

And use her story in comparison with our Good Shepherd, for,

“He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD is your keeper;
He will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

Psalm 121:4-5, 7

The hired hand, the Good Shepherd reminds us,

takes his pay-check, stops at the saloon and goes home to bed,

The own who owns the sheep lies down with those who know his voice,
and for whom he'd give his life to save.

For we are saved by the blood of *this* Lamb,
Jesus is one among the rest of us bleating sheep.

In John's Gospel, we are just days before the arrest, beating, and death.

And of course, Jesus is aware of what is to come:

to lay down his life for us silly sheep.

Jesus protects us, even offering himself to be torn by the thorns of life
and to die at the teeth of the wolf -

all the wolves that threaten us with ultimate, eternal death.

It is like Jesus distracts the wolf, so that we can run to safety.

The bad part is that Jesus doesn't make it.

Or does He?

For in the next verses in John's Gospel,

Jesus assures us that He lays down his life,
so that He can take it up again.

This is the command I received from God.

John 10: 17-18

And in that, we too shall live in his everlasting arms.

AMEN.

The CREED

Let us now profess our communal faith in the words of our Baptismal
Covenant with the Apostles' Creed, saying:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection ☩ of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS

BCP Form II, adapted

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for Justin the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael our Presiding Bishop and Kevin our Bishop; for the Diocesan staff; and for all ministers and people. I ask your prayers for this parish family, and for all who are isolated from their community of faith. Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.

I ask your prayers for those who govern and hold authority in the nations; that they may be led to govern with equity and justice to benefit the entire human family. Inspire them to discover new ways of overcoming divisions and mistrust. We pray for Donald, the President of the United States, the Congress, Thomas our Governor, and Sarah, mayor of our Borough. Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.

I ask your prayers for the poor, for those who are on furlough or have lost their jobs; for the sick, especially Russ and Margaret; the hungry; the oppressed, and anxious; and those in prison, especially Justin and Mitchell. I ask your prayers for those anticipating death. Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.

I ask your prayers for the departed, especially Robert and Alan; those who have died by violent acts, and those who have succumbed to the complications of COVID-19, especially Krishna and Peter. Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.

I ask your thanksgiving for families with whom we live and love; thanksgivings for first responders, health-care workers and all who offer of themselves for the betterment of others. Good Shepherd, hear our prayer.

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Risen Lord. Amen.

from the Archbishop of Canterbury

Let us now pray together in the words which Christ himself taught us, saying:

Our Father...

BLESSING

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant: make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13: 20-21

And the blessing of God Almighty, who has Created us, ☩ God Almighty who has Redeemed us, and God the Almighty who continually Sanctifies us, be upon you and remain with you for ever. Amen.

Organ Postlude -

1 stanza of “*Savior, like a shepherd lead us*”

(Hymnal 1982, #708)

3 May 2020
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