

Sunday, April 21, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Easter/Earth Day Sunday



Introduction to the day

The image of the good shepherd shows us how the risen Christ brings us to life. It is the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, one of mutual knowledge and love, that gives the shepherd authority. The shepherd's willingness to lay down his life for the sheep shows his love. First John illustrates what it means to lay down our lives for one another by the example of sharing our wealth with any sibling in need.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today – Evening Prayer 6:30pm FB Live

Tuesday – Men's Bible Study 6:30pm hybrid

Wednesday – Morning Prayer 9:30am FB Live

Thursday-Saturday – Synod Assembly Loveland

GREETING

The beauty of the Creator inspire us,
the grace of the Good Shepherd be with us,
and the unity of the Breath of Life enfold us all. **May it be so!**

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Look! Here is water! What is to prevent us from giving thanks for baptism?

Here is water.

Rushing water. Surging water. Pounding, crashing surf of water.

Foaming waters to wash us clean, to scrub away the guilt, the burden that clings,
to wipe away the grime of archived fear.

Blessed be water.

We give you thanks, Creator God, for sea and ocean, tides and waves.

Here is water.

Tumbling water. Streaming water. Free-flowing-shower-of-grace water.

Bubbling fount to soothe our hearts, balm for the scars of angry division,
salve for the wounds of ignorant pride.

Blessed be water.

We give you thanks, creative Word, for rain and snow, storm and mist.

Here is water.

Clear water. Cool water. Quench-the-thirst-of-our-soul water.

Still waters to restore our spirits, source of hope, refreshment for the journey toward the fold,
sparkling with the promise of new life.

Blessed be water.

We give you thanks, creating Spirit, for stream and pool, spring and lake.

Here is water, through which God created and continues to create.

In the beginning, weaving with the Breath of life every living being;

throughout history, a gateway for divine deliverance;

in every moment, re-membering the mystery of life, bonding all of creation as one.

We give you thanks, blessed Creator, for the gift of life,

for this water without which life would cease, for the gift of baptism, through which these
waters birth us again into your promise of newness, wholeness, and oneness.

Blessed be Creator God, creative ✚ Word, creating Spirit.

Blessed be each soul here and not here, one people, one with all that is.

Blessed be this water that births us, renews us, and welcomes us home.

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

O Lord Christ, good shepherd of the sheep, you seek the lost and guide us into your fold. Feed us, and we shall be satisfied; heal us, and we shall be whole. Make us one with you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Acts 4:5-12

A reading from Acts.

⁵The next day [the] rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let 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. ¹¹This Jesus is

‘the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;
it has become the cornerstone.’

¹²There 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. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: 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;**

³he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

⁴**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.**

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶**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.**

SECOND READING: 1 John 3:16-24

A reading from 1 John.

¹⁶We know love by this, that [Jesus Christ] laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷How 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?

¹⁸Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. ¹⁹And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; ²²and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

²³And 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. ²⁴All 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.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: John 10:11-18

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] ¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

¹²The 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. ¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I 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. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. ¹⁸No 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 the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Rejoicing that Jesus is risen and love has triumphed over fear, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need of good news.

A brief silence.

Shepherding God, gather your church whenever we wander from you and one another.

Empower our church in ministries around the world to worship and serve alongside global companions as equal partners and coworkers in the gospel. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Nurturing God, preserve the health of biomes and ecosystems. Inspire scientists, researchers, conservation organizations, and all people entrusted with the task of caring for creation, that we may be better stewards of the world around us. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, lead nations and communities to share resources, cooperate in solving conflicts, and listen to the wisdom of Indigenous peoples. Help all those with power to share it and to use such power for good. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, protect the very young and the very old, those living without housing, victims of domestic abuse, and all who live with chronic illness or compromised immune systems. Guide communities to actively care for people who are vulnerable. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, help this and all communities of faith to listen for your voice. Call us away from things that distract us from following you. Invite us to more deeply love and serve people who are lonely, isolated, and on the margins. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Shepherding God, send your Holy Spirit upon the Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly, especially as a new bishop is elected. Direct it by the light of your Spirit, that we may have a right judgment in all things and rejoice at all times in your peace. Give safe travel and happy returns to all who will be in attendance. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Living God, we give thanks for our ancestors in faith (*including Anselm of Canterbury and all who labored to help generations understand the good news of the gospel*). Strengthen us to share the good news in our own day. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, most merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abiding love; through Jesus Christ, our resurrected and living Lord. **Amen.**

OFFERING PRAYER

Whatever we ask, in accordance with your will,
we receive and our cup overflows.
Confident in divine abundance
and humbly eager to turn from covetous greed,
we return what we have received for the Shepherd's work,
that green pastures and safe folds
will welcome any who live in fear;
that peaceful waters will sustain hurting hearts;
that a voice of welcome will be heard at each gate;
that a feast will be prepared for all who hunger and thirst;
and all may safely graze.
In the name of the One who is our comfort.
Amen.

BLESSING

Little children, sheep of the Good Shepherd:
As we journey toward the fold,
we travel through the valley of shadow,
growing in grace, becoming a blessing.
Baptismal wells restore our souls,
a rich feast is spread by divine abundance,
and divisions end as our cup overflows.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Journey gently on this planet's green pasture.
Thanks be to God.