



**The Lord is my Shepherd. The Lord is my Shepherd?  
The Lord is MY Shepherd!**

Before I could read I could recite Psalm 23. I do not remember why or how that happened but I knew it verbatim. I probably didn't understand it yet I knew that it was a special Psalm by sheer hearing the verses. When I was twelve years old I heard it at my brother's funeral and I thought, oh that's what it means. I associated it with sadness and death and I didn't like the Psalm for a while. You see, I thought all Psalms were supposed to be happy. I thought my brother shouldn't have died. I wondered about this Good Shepherd. It took me a while to get back to the comforting God who is my shepherd who walks with me in the good and the bad. He leads me and I am thankful for every step he and I take together.

It seems now as we live in this Pandemic time of chaos and fear that we hear the Word of God clearly and with hope. We hear the promise that He is with us that we are loved and forgiven, that we are granted grace for the day that we have a God that promises to give us what we need. Verse upon verse and chapter upon chapter brings us joy and peace.

That doesn't mean that life is not hard and that things are going to be back to the normal in a snap of a finger. It doesn't mean we are not going to have any troubles. It means that because of all this or in spite of all things, God is with us. He promises.

This week Bishop Tom Aitken has pre-recorded and wrote the sermon for this Sunday, the Good Shepherd Sunday. It will be wonderful to hear him or read his sermon this week. We are continuing to send out a sermon/bulletin every week. If you have access, you may see our service on First Lutheran Church Hinckley MN (You Tube) or on our Web Page, First Lutheran Church. Thank you to everyone that has helped and supported me in this different way of getting the Good News out to everyone.

Thanks again to all of you for your support and encouragement. I feel so lifted up in prayer and want you to know you are in my prayers each and every day.

Peace, Always Peace,

*Pastor Brenda Wicklund*

***The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.....Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.***

***Psalm 23***

++++  
+



**FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH  
Fourth Sunday of Easter, May 3, 2020**

*Notes on the Worship Service*

*† Bishop Aitken has given all our Rostered Minister the week-end of May 1-3 off in honor of their faithful work and tireless efforts at ingenuity during the "Stay at home: period. This liturgy and sermon is for use in congregations across the Northeastern Minnesota Synod. It was videoed at Knife River Lutheran Church, Knife River, Minnesota. Preacher is † Bishop Tom Aitken, Assisting Minister is Pr. Susan Berge (Pastor at Knife River Lutheran) and pianist is Carol Carlson. Staff Administrative Assistant Sarah Roe videoed and put together the service. An accompanying written*

*Liturgy is provided for your use and you are encouraged to sing along with the music, read the Psalm together, sing the responses to the prayer of the church, and provide an offering for the ongoing ministries of your congregation. Bishop Aitken reminds us all to continue to stay in place, and worship with your congregation's or a neighboring one's online worship services until further notice. **God's peace to all of you during this continued pandemic.***

## **Announcements**

### **Prelude**

#### **Invocation**

**Bishop Aitken**

#### **Confession/Absolution**

L: Blessed be the Holy Trinity, †One God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. Amen. Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

L: Most merciful God,

**C: We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

L: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father and of the †Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

#### **Hymn of Praise**

**Red Worship Book pg. 139**

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the most high Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

#### **Prayer of the Day**

L: 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 God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

#### **Psalm: Psalm 23**

##### **A Psalm of David**

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.

#### **The Holy Gospel according to St. John**

**C: Glory to you, O Lord. (spoken)**

**Red Worship Book pg. 143**

## **Gospel: John 10:1-10**

<sup>10</sup>“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. <sup>5</sup>They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” <sup>6</sup>Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

<sup>7</sup>So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup>All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. <sup>9</sup>I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup>The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

## **The Gospel of Our Lord**

**C: Praise to you, O Christ. (spoken)**

**Red Worship Book pg. 143**

## **Sermon**

**Bishop Tom Aitken**

Dear beloved in our Synod,

Grace and peace to you, through Christ our brother, our Good Shepherd, and Lord.

Psalm 23, appointed as one of the lessons today, is the best known passage of Scripture in the whole world, and one of the most powerful ones. Let’s look and listen to how this psalm, linked together today with Jesus in our gospel lesson brings new life to us in our “Valley of the Shadow of death.”

The person who wrote Psalm 23 was on a journey. Like yours and mine, it was a journey of life and of faith. Something happened to this person, something tragic. You live long enough and you’ll experience not only the beauty but also the pain of life. It will happen. And you will have questions that Psalm 23 addresses honestly. You might be worried today about a loved one who could easily get the coronavirus. Or maybe you have already lost a friend or relative to it. You may be living with another “dark valley” right now with that relative whose life has hit bottom with deep anxiety, chemical dependency, or loss of income to take care of your family.

The bad thing that happens to this Biblical writer shows up in the very middle of the psalm. In Verse 4, “Even though I walk through the *darkest valley* (or, in earlier translations, “*the valley off the shadow of death*”) are the words that describe the author’s tragedy.

Before verse four, things went well: There were quiet waters, lush green pastures and life was good, then the tragedy happens. We don’t know what it was; it could have been that the Psalmist experienced the death of a family member, or that death was approaching soon. Or it could have been an illness that would force the Psalmist or a loved one out of the community in those days, or a huge rejection or betrayal. But something tragic happened. The author does not mince words or cover this tragedy with sugary piety. Notice how Psalm 23 does not declare that God keeps pious people safe from all harm or that your life will be danger-free if you pray, read scripture and do good things. It doesn’t say that those who love God will receive a protection bubble from illness or the power of wind, water or gravity. I once had an Intern, back in the 90’s who wrote a paper for Seminary entitled, “Into every Life a little rain must Fall.” And of course this is true. We used that paper as a resource for faith and bible study and the problem of evil and natural tragedies. That can be helpful, well and good for when there are no pandemics, when your own life isn’t in the balance. What we are getting in Psalm 23 is more: it is the real life journey of faith that ends in strength and new life in the midst of tragedy.

Hear the Good News in this famous Psalm. In the last half of Psalm 23 we get in on how the writer has experienced God in some powerful way, right in the valley of the shadow of death. God doesn’t abandon us but leads us through the dangers. Psalm 23 invites us to experience living with trust in the goodness of God. Back in seminary I was introduced to the devotional writings of first century rabbis. I came across one who wrote a morning prayer I have never forgotten. He wrote, “O Holy One, if this were the *only* day You would have granted me to live, for this day alone, I give you eternal thanks.”

*Now Hear the Psalm again:* “Even though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, 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.” (Verses 4-6)

Many of you know that my good friend and mentor of 35 years, Pastor Earl Carlson died on Easter Sunday just a few weeks ago. He was 101 years old and we talked right up to his last days. What the Psalmist says about God’s goodness, even in the midst of tragedy is exactly what Earl taught me over and over. He was born with polio – and it remained in his body all his life until in his old age he was bent in half from the waist. I remember many people saying to him, “Why you, Earl? You are so kind, so helpful, you bring us such joy.

Why do you have to suffer, why did God let this happen to you?” And you know what he would say? “Why *not* me”? Life is good, Life is beautiful. This kind of thing happens to many people, why should I be different? And just remember, like you my life is joined to Jesus’ life forever.”

Jesus knew, didn’t he, what it meant to live in God’s world, with goodness, risks, and tragedy. He entered it and through his life, death and resurrection showed God’s power in the midst of all that life can bring us. He was not ashamed to call us – as you know –sisters and brothers to him. He is the pioneer and perfecter of our own faith, standing with us in the midst of our weakness and fear to bring new life into us when we need it most.

God is not a magic rabbit’s foot, or lucky charm. God is the love that brings us hope, the strength to live in adversity, the courage to stand against evil, the joy to live life abundantly as Jesus says in our Gospel lesson today: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (verse 10) And God is the power to endure suffering as the Psalmist proclaims and the power to serve our neighbor as Martin Luther always reminded his flock. We may wish God had made a different kind of world. But this is the world God made and God is still working in, redeeming all of creation, all of humankind, even our last “enemies” and tragedies. Christ says to you today: ‘I am your gate, I am your shepherd, I am your bread, your sustenance, your resurrection and life. ‘And he will bring us home one day. You can count on it, today, tomorrow, next week, the rest of your lives and into Eternity.

Trust the Story. Trust Jesus. Trust the gospel. To the glory of God, and the good of your neighbor. Amen.

**Hymn “Children of the Heavenly Father”** (vs. 1 and 2)

**Red Worship Book 781**

Children of the heav'nly Father safely in his bosom gather; nestling bird nor star in heaven such a refuge e'er was given.

God his own doth tend and nourish, in his holy courts they flourish. From all evil things he spares them, in his mighty arms he bears them.

### **Apostles Creed**

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, 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, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come 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 of the Church**

*Note: After each petition, all sing together “Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life”*

L: In our separate homes, but gathered together in the Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need. After each petition ends with the words, “Hear us, gracious Lord”, we will sing the refrain, “Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.

L: ”Shepherding God, draw us closer to You as our Good Shepherd, trusting in Your guidance and following Your lead. Give us hearts to love you, minds to know you, and wills to serve you. Draw us daily into closer communion with you and into closer community with those around us. Hear us, gracious Lord...

**C: Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.**

L: God of resurrection, from the very beginning you give the church the gift of witnesses, as preachers, teachers, and pastors. Bless all who proclaim the good news at this time, especially our local pastors, our Bishop, Tom Aitkin, and our Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton. Hear us, gracious Lord ...

**C: Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.**

L: We give thanks for the technology by which we stay connected; for the food we have; for support of our community of faith. Bless the creativity of worship leaders during this time, especially for all who are assisting the digital sharing of worship, that the faithful be nourished. Hear us, gracious Lord ...

**C: Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.**

L: We lift up to you our distraught world facing the coronavirus; for countries hardest hit; for those who grieve their dead; for the sick and their families; for those who are quarantined or stranded away from home; for those fearful of an unknown future; for the millions of unemployed; for all service workers; for children at home; for hospitals, in their desperate need for supplies; for physicians, nurses, home health aides and medical researchers. Hear us, gracious Lord ...

**C: Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.**

L: We pray for peace and justice in the world: for an end to war and international turmoil; for concord in our troubled society; for the heads of state, legislators, and local civic leaders, that they enact wise procedures to deal with the coronavirus, and in distributing governmental economic aid. Hear us, gracious Lord ...

**C: Shepherd me O God, beyond my wants, beyond my fears, from death into life.**

L: Into your hands, Shepherding God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**C: Amen.**

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Gathered together by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.**

*Offering Please give your offering to your local congregation's ministries*

**Hymn** "Now the Green Blade Rises" (vs. 1 & 4)

**Red Worship Book 379**

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain, wheat that in dark earth many days has lain; love lives again, that with the dead has been; love is come again like wheat arising green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain, your touch can call us back to life again, fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been; love is come again like wheat arising green.

### **Benediction**

**Bishop Aitken**

The God of all grace, †Bless you now and forever. Amen.

**Hymn** "God Be with You Till We Meet Again" (vs. 1 & 2)

**Red Worship Book 536**

God be with you till we meet again, by His counsels guide, uphold you, with His sheep securely fold you,  
God be with you till we meet again.

*Refrain*

Till we meet, till we meet, till we meet at Jesus' feet; till we meet, till we meet, God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again, 'neath His wings protecting hide you, daily manna still divide you,

God be with you till we meet again. [Refrain]

### **Dismissal**

Go in Peace, Serve the Lord

**Thanks be to God"**



**Prayer Concerns~** The family of Robert Williams (father to Robin Hendrix), Rebecca Karp (niece of Marina Vork), Amanda Robbins, Jessica Lindahl, Lois Kunze, David Stephenson and Annetta Eberlein (brother and sister-in-law of Kevin Stephenson), Larry Lammers (brother-in-law of Elaine Garaghty), Debbie Bowman (daughter of Ron and Judy Smith), Karen Johnson, Carol Bostrom, Leigha Ness (Pastor Brenda's great-niece), and Barbara Ekberg (sister of Loretta Sprado.)

**For our members in care facilities ~** Ruta Kalnins, Nancy Nelson, Freida Pfahl, Dorothy Svendsen and Max Tatting.

**For firefighters, EMT's, those who serve to protect Policemen and women and military. For world peace. For our companion synods.**

**For our missionaries** Jacqueline and Patrick Bencke.

**Please note the following birthdays were omitted on the May birthday calendar:**

**May 5      Evelyn Klein**

**May 15     Scarlett Maser**

First Lutheran Church  
301 Lawler Avenue South  
P.O. Box 459  
Hinckley, MN 55037

Non-Profit Organization  
U. S. Postage  
PAID  
Hinckley, MN 55037  
Permit No. 37

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

---