

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, April 21st, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

The Great 'I AM'
Fourth Sunday of Easter
John 10:1-21

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Along with all those in heaven, let us cry out together:

Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!

Along with the redeemed, let us praise God with joyful hearts:

For this reason, we come before the throne of God and worship the Lord, day and night.

Called together by the Holy Spirit, let us rejoice and sing:

We will hunger and thirst no more. The Lamb will guide us to springs of the water of life.

Let us worship God!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of the ages, God of today,

You are compassion, our cup overflows.

You are hope; you lead us into green pastures.

You are truth; you lead us beside quiet streams.

You are life; you restore our souls.

Morning, noon and night, O God, you are the source of our joy.

We gather to worship you as one family of your people,

honoring you as our Creator,

trusting you as our Saviour,

celebrating you as the Spirit who gives us life. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "This Little Light of Mine"

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Righteous Father,
we who own more than we use,
proclaim more than we experience,
and request more than we need,
come asking your forgiveness.
We seek your salvation, then act like we save ourselves.
We beg your forgiveness, then repeat our errors.
We experience your grace, then act defeated.
We rely on your power, but only in hard times.
We have become confused and misguided.
Forgive our every defection.
Bring us to an unbroken commitment
and a steady trust,
through Jesus Christ, who is the way of hope,
the truth of God,
and the life of love,
now and always. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

God demonstrates his own love for us in this:
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Since we have now been justified by his blood,
how much more shall we be saved
from God's wrath through him!

The 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.**

Opening Hymn: "Here I am to Worship"

Verse

Light of the world you stepped down into darkness, open my eyes let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you, hope of a life spent with you.

Chorus

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down, here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me

Verse 2

King of all days O so highly exalted, glorious in Heaven above
Humbly you came to the earth you created, all for love's sake became poor.

Chorus

Bridge

I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross
I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross

Chorus

Responsive Reading

Psalm 23:1-6

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**2 He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.**

3 He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

**4 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.**

5 You 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
forever.**

Anthem (Music Ministry): "He Is the Everlasting God" Choir

**Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)**

Scripture

John 10: 1-21

“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶ This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷ So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. ¹³ He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

¹⁹ There was again a division among the Jews because of these words. ²⁰ Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” ²¹ Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

Sermon

In the book of Exodus, Moses asks God an interesting question.

Exodus 3: 13-14

¹³ Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’

God was known to his people as ‘I am’, and Jesus often referred to himself using the terms ‘I am’ In the book of John Jesus says; ‘I am the way’, ‘I am the truth’, ‘I am the

life', 'I am the resurrection', 'I am the bread of life'. 'I am the vine', 'I am the light of the world'. Each time that Jesus said the words 'I am' he was referring back to the meeting between God and Moses and to his meeting with the religious leaders.

John 8:59-59

⁵⁸ **Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."**

⁵⁹ **So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.**

Jesus referring to himself as the great 'I am' infuriated the Jews. Every Jewish child had learned their entire life the story of Moses being called by God to deliver his people from slavery in Egypt. They knew every detail of the story; they knew that God called Moses in the wilderness and that Moses resisted. They knew that the only question Moses asked of God was what his name is, and they knew that God alone was to be referred to as 'I am.'

On the day that Jesus referred to himself by saying, '**Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.**' Everyone gathered knew exactly what he was saying and exactly who he was claiming to be. And claiming to be God was one of the worst possible things a person could do, it was blasphemy of the highest order and the only acceptable response to that form of blasphemy was stoning the person to death. Yet somehow Jesus escaped the crowds who sought to end his life that day.

In the book of John Jesus uses the phrase 'I am' on 22 separate occasions. In John 8:58 he is using the phrase to define who he is in this world. It is simply 'I am' without any subject or verb associated to it, he is emphasizing that he is indeed the same as the great 'I am'. In the other 21 instances where Jesus says 'I am' it is followed by something.

In ten of those sayings Jesus is using 'I am' to identify himself. For example, when he is arrested in the garden, Jesus asks the men who they are looking for and they reply that they are looking for Jesus of Nazarene to which Jesus replies, 'I am he'.

Yet there are 11 other instances in which Jesus uses the 'I am' statement metaphorically. He describes himself by comparing himself to something that the people around him could understand so that they could better come to know him as the Son of God.

In the Scripture we are looking at today Jesus says twice, 'I am the Good Shepherd'. So, we should be asking ourselves: Why is he referring to himself as a shepherd? What could it possibly mean to those gathered listening that day? and What are we meant to understand in the world today? Jesus often used the everyday to illustrate the eternal and, on this day, he has chosen to use the idea of a flock of sheep and their shepherd.

Everyone in Jesus's day would understand the analogy of a sheep and their shepherd. For the Jews gathered around, they would be reminded of the Story of David, their greatest king, who had been a shepherd. When David described God, he often used the phrase, 'The Lord is my Shepherd', so the Israelites would have recognized Jesus' reference to himself as a shepherd almost immediately.

The Bible also refers to God's people as sheep as well, and it is not always a compliment. We often think of sheep the way that they are pictured in children's shows; soft, fluffy, and docile animals. However, that is not a full vision of sheep, they can also be stubborn, foolish, and disobedient.

But how do we understand this analogy today? how many people here have sheep or know a shepherd? Most Christians today would understand a sports analogy better than an agricultural one.

It is important that we understand this analogy, because this is one of the two analogies that Jesus uses in the book of John that he asks us to emulate. When Jesus said 'I am the light of the world' he told his followers to go out and share that light with the world around them, bringing light into the darkness and acting as a lighthouse or hilltop beacon for those who are still seeking God.

Jesus does not ever tell people to be a gate, or a vine, bread, or the way.

Yet, this analogy of the shepherd and sheep goes much further, as it speaks to the church. Later in the book of John, Jesus will have a very important conversation with Peter.

John 21: 15-17

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." ¹⁶ He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep.

Paul in the book of Acts will tell the elders of the church in Ephesus.

Acts 20:28

²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

There is no denying that the idea of the Good Shepherd and sheep is meant to be applied to the Church in the world today. In many churches the pastor is referred to as the shepherd and the congregation as his flock, and I would agree that this analogy fits well within the church. However, I would make one simple yet significant change to our understanding of this analogy as it applies to the modern church.

We tend to break the church up into buildings and congregations, each with its own shepherd and its own flock. However, the Bible teaches that all of God's people, in all places and times are the church of Christ, the flock, and therefore there can really only be one Good Shepherd, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, a pastor is simple a sheep-dog, someone who follows the orders of the shepherd to keep the portion of the flock for which he is responsible following the directions and care of the One True Good Shepherd.

And what are the directions of that One Good Shepherd? We can start by looking at Psalm 23

Psalm 23:1-2

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

A shepherd leads his flock to food. In the region of Galilee if a flock spent too long in one spot, they would destroy the vegetation, so their shepherd had to keep them in motion, allowing them enough time to graze and get their fill before moving them to a new area so that they did not overgraze and make a patch of land barren.

And truthfully, moving those sheep from one place to another was not the simplest of tasks. Sheep are not the brightest of animals, but because of the relationship they have with the shepherd they listen to his voice. Jesus says that his sheep know his voice, he calls them by name, and they come to him.

If you had lived in Jesus's day you would get to see something truly incredible. Shepherds would often bring their flocks together to graze in the same area, the flocks mixing together and sharing in the meal that they have been presented. However, when a shepherd was going to move his own flock, he simply called them, and they would separate themselves from the horde of grazing sheep and join their shepherd as he moved them onto the next stop in their trip.

The sheep recognize his voice and they come to him, and as he walks ahead of them leading them to the next spot they will stop, and graze and they follow him faithfully because they know his voice.

They know his voice because they hear it all the time, they know that if they listen to his voice and trust and obey his call that they will receive good things, they will be led to food and water.

This is what Christians are called to do. To hear the call of God in his Scriptures and to trust and obey in the words, following his voice, knowing that it will lead to good things, eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven. The same way that the flock of sheep trust the shepherd with their mortal wellbeing, that his voice will lead them to the things that they need to survive, food and water. If we follow Christ, his words, his teachings, and his examples he will lead us to what we need for our spiritual wellbeing. And like flocks of sheep, we will sometimes be called out of other flocks we might be grazing alongside, so we need to know the Good Shepherds voice, so it is easier for us to recognize and follow his call. This is why Christians are consistently told to study the Word of God, to be familiar with the truth of the life of Jesus Christ, so that we know his voice, we can discern it, pick it out, from all of the other voices that may call out to us in this world.

Jesus tells us so in today's Scripture, **'⁵ A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.'** If you know the teachings of the Word of God, you will not listen to the voice of the world. When something you are told does not match us with the Jesus of the Scripture you will reject it, and obey the teachings of the word of God, even if that voice comes from the pulpit. There is only one Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ and his voice is the only one his flock is to obey. So, you should be sure that you know his voice well, so that the voices that attempt to lead you in the wrong direction cannot sway you in your life.

The problem is that truthfully, many people who consider themselves part of Gods flock, do not know the Good Shepherds voice. The sheep often go their own way, follow other voices, and get themselves in trouble.

Even in the Scriptures it speaks of this, Jesus speaks of going out and seeking lost sheep. Sheep who either followed the wrong voice or decided that they knew better than the Good Shepherd and went off on their own. The Scriptures warn us all against this.

Proverbs 14:12

**¹² There is a way that seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death.**

I think that is pretty clear. When we decide to not follow the voice of the Good Shepherd into eternal life in the new Jerusalem, there is only one other option.

The Good Shepherd seeks to lead you to where you will be fed spiritually, and my job as a faithful sheepdog is to follow his orders and try to direct you in every sermon, Bible study and conversation to the Word of God and the message of the Gospel so that you can know the voice of Jesus in your life.

Psalm 23:4

**⁴ 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.**

The shepherd protects his sheep from things that would seek to harm them, and he uses his faithful sheepdogs to do so in this world as well. Does anyone here remember that old bugs bunny cartoon with Ralph the wolf and Sam the sheepdog? Every morning, they would clock into work and Ralph would spend his whole day trying 1000 different ways to steal a sheep, and Sam would do everything in his power and ability to prevent Ralph from succeeding. Little did you know that bugs bunny had a Biblical application and was teaching us all something about the kingdom of heaven.

Sheep are sheep, they live in the wilderness, and they are out and about looking for food and water. And often when they are out looking for food and water there are also other animals, like the wolf, looking for food as well. Sheep have a lot of natural enemies in this world, but they have no natural defenses. They cannot run fast, they do not have sharp teeth to bite their enemies with, the truth is that in a battle between a wolf and sheep, the sheep are going to lose 100% of the time. So, it is up to the Good Shepherd and his sheepdogs to protect his flocks from the things that would do them harm.

Again, the Jews listening to Jesus would have gotten this immediately, they would remember the story of David, the boy shepherd, and the giant Goliath. When David volunteers to take on the giant, King Saul tells him, 'Don't be ridiculous, you are just a boy.'

To which David responds.

1 Samuel 17:34-37

³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. ³⁶ Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." ³⁷ And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!"

David follows the voice of the Good Shepherd; he knows God and he knows that God leads us and protects us. Time and time again in the New Testament we see false

teaches portrayed as wolves that are looking to prey on the sheep in God's flock. Part of my responsibility as one of God's sheepdogs is to protect his flock from those wolves and their false teachings. To counter them and to ensure that the voice you are listening to is the voice of the Good Shepherd and not the wolves of this world. And the best way to do that is to be immersed in the Word of God so you can discern what is his voice and what are the voices that are trying to lead you astray,

And sometimes this requires the Good Shepherd and his sheepdogs to speak up harshly against the ways of this world.

Ecclesiastes 12:11

¹¹ The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

The goad that they are speaking of was like a cattle prod, it was a stick that had nails in the end that was used to convince the sheep that they were supposed to do what the Shepherd was telling them to do. The Word of God is sometimes painful for us to hear, but there are times when that pain is necessary, so that we do not wander off following the wrong voices in this world.

The shepherd in Jesus's day had three options when a sheep has wandered off on its own not listening to his voice and staying with the flock. Let them be eaten by their enemies, eat them themselves, or discipline them and bring them back into the flock.

There are stories from the time of shepherds dealing with particularly headstrong sheep that would not only wander off themselves, but also lead off other members of the flock into danger. If the shepherd could not change this behavior with coaxing, they would sometime resort to a more drastic measure. They would break one of the sheep's legs and then set it. He would then carry the sheep with him everywhere, and that sheep would be fully dependent on the shepherd for everything it needed to survive, it would get so use to being dependent on the shepherd that by the time its leg had healed it would never leave the shepherds side and no longer be a threat to itself or to the other sheep.

The truth is that we all need some of God's discipline in our lives at times. Some of us just need to hear the harsh tone of the Good Shepherds voice, or maybe a nip from one of the sheep dogs to stay in the flock, others might need a good thwack from the goad once in a while, but there are people who have to hit rock bottom before they recognize that the Good Shepherd is indeed there for their benefit.

The book of Hebrews reminds us.

Hebrews 12:7-11

⁷ It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸ If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

The Good Shepherd disciplines us because we are meant to be part of his flock. He disciplines us because we are like his children whom he loves so dearly he does not want to lose one.

The Scripture tells us that discipline is an important part of church life. It is critical to the health of God's flock because it keeps us focused on his voice.

In 1 Corinthians Paul writes.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

Paul is telling the church at some point there has to be a clear message about what is right and wrong in the eyes of the Lord. I know the world tells us not to judge, but here is a message very clearly given to not only judge, but to excommunicate a man from the church because of his sin. Paul is saying the church must be clear on what is right and what is wrong according to the Scripture because discipline in this world has a bearing on the eternal fate of a person, they will either end up in the Kingdom of Heaven or the Lake of eternal fire, and if we really do love someone their eternal fate is of much more importance than this fleeting world.

There is one more lesson for us to take from this analogy of the Shepherd and the flock. Things that are important for us to know and understand as that Flock of God's people.

The shepherd and the sheepdog do not create baby sheep on their own. This might sound silly, but often when a church is facing challenging times, it is the shepherd and sheepdog that the sheep blame. However, the reality is that it is the Shepherd and sheepdogs' responsibility to give the sheep a safe and healthy place for them and in that environment, they are meant to reproduce. If you want the flock to grow you have to get out there and bring other people so that they can get to know the Good Shepherd.

A shepherd or sheepdog cannot eat and drink for the sheep. You all know the old saying, 'you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink'. The same is true for sheep. Through a pastor you can be presented with opportunity to learn and understand all of the Word of God you need to survive in this world, but at some point, you need to make the choice to start taking it in and making it part of your lives.

If sheep are to grow and stay healthy, they have to eat the fields that they are brought to, the shepherd or the sheepdog can only lead them to green pastures and still waters. They cannot force them to eat, the sheep must do that on their own.

If people of God are to stay spiritually healthy, they must eat, God and the Pastor can only lead them to the Word of God, they cannot force them to make it part of their lives. If you are not feeding on the word of God, if you are not letting his Word into your life, there is nothing I can do to force you to do that. Only you can make the choice to eat in the green pastures and drink in the still waters of God's Word. I am just a sheepdog; I can just point out some of the greener grass and fresher waters that God tells me to point out to you, but you have to accept it into your life.

So let us all be reminded of our call to follow the Good Shepherd as Peter says,

1 Peter 2:25

²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

And walk as the Salt and Light of God's Word in this world, bringing the lost sheep of this broken world back into his flock so that they too can know the Good Shepherd and find rest in green pastures and beside still waters for all of eternity in God's warm embrace.

Let us Pray,

By Your Word You Have Brought Us out of Darkness

Lord God, heavenly Father,
we most heartily thank you
that by your Word
you have brought us out of the darkness of error
into the light of your grace.

Mercifully help us to walk in that light,
 guard us from all error and false doctrine
 and grant that we may not become ungrateful
 and despise and persecute your Word,
 as your people did long ago,
 but receive it with all our heart,
 govern our lives according to it
 and put all our trust in your grace
 through the merit of your dear Son,
 Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one true God, now and forever.

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity 25 / Reformation

Hymn: "Blessed Be Your Name:

Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful Where your streams of
 abundance flow
 blessed be Your name
 Blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place though I walk through the
 wilderness
 blessed be Your name.

Pre chorus
 Every blessing You pour out I'll turn back to praise
 When the darkness closes in Lord still I will say

Chorus
 Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be your name
 Blessed be the name of the Lord, blessed be Your glorious name

Blessed be your name when the sun's shining down on me
 When the world's all as it should be blessed be your name
 Blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering though there's pain in the
 offering
 Blessed be your name,

Prechorus

Chorus
 Bridge
 You give and take away, You give and take away
 My heart will choose to say Lord, blessed be Your name.

Invitation to Offering**Offering****Offertory Prayer**
(Congregant Prepared)**Closing Hymn: "Hosanna, Praise is Rising"**

Praise is rising eyes are turning to you, we turn to you
 Hope is stirring, hearts are yearning for you, we long for you

Pre Chorus

When we see you we find strength to face the day
 In Your presence all our fears are washed away, washed away.

Chorus

Hosanna, hosanna. You are the God who serves us, worthy of all our praises
 Hosanna, hosanna. Come have Your way among us, we welcome you here Lord Jesus

Hear the sound of hearts returning to you, we turn to you
 In your kingdom broken lives are made new, you make us new.

Pastoral Prayer

Lord our God, we thank you
 for the many people throughout the ages
 who have followed your way of life joyfully:
 for the many saints and martyrs, men, and women,
 who have offered up their very lives
 so that your life abundant may become manifest
 and your kingdom may advance.

Lord, we thank you for those
 who chose the way of your Son, our brother Jesus Christ.
 In the midst of trial, they held out hope;
 in the midst of hatred, they kindled love;
 in the midst of persecutions, they witnessed to your power;
 in the midst of despair, they clung to your promise.
 O Lord, we thank you for the truth they learned and passed on to us:
 that it is by giving that we shall receive;
 it is by becoming weak that we shall be strong;

it is by loving others that we shall be loved;
it is by offering ourselves that the kingdom will unfold;
it is by dying that we shall inherit life everlasting.
Lord, give us courage to follow your way of life.

For your love and faithfulness
we will at all times praise your name. **Amen.**

Benediction

May the grace of God,
freely given through Christ, our Lord,
and sufficient for all our needs,
and may the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
who testifies with our spirit
that we are God's children,
guide and sustain us this day
and forever. **Amen.**