

Worship Service for April 25th: 4th Sunday of Easter - Mission Awareness Sunday

- **New Testament:** Acts 4:5-12
- **New Testament:** John 10:11-18
- **Psalms:** Psalm 23

Announcements:

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.
- Our next Bible study is on May 5th. Time: 7pm; Place: St. David's. We will be studying James 4.

Sermon Title: The Good Shepherd!

When we hear the word shepherd in the Bible, most of our minds go directly to Psalms 23 because that is the most popular passage in the Bible on the Shepherd. And the Psalmist David details to us what his experience is with the Shepherd. He says,

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, 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 your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Today, Jesus Christ is giving us a great revelation that he is that Shepherd, the good Shepherd. He explains his functions as a good shepherd – he lays down his life for the sheep, he knows his own by name, they know him and know his voice and he has other sheep that are not of the sheep pen.

As a shepherd, Jesus does many things for his sheep but most importantly he lays down his life for the sheep. Shepherds were known to take care of their sheep and try to keep them safe in Jesus' time. However, laying down their life for a sheep was not something that was done.

Jesus is therefore showing us the incredible level of devotedness and love that he has for the sheep. He gives us an example in the story of the lost sheep where Jesus explains that the good shepherd if he has a hundred sheep and loses one of them,

will leave the ninety-nine in search of the one. The good shepherd is there to take care of us to the point of dying on the cross for our sins.

The fact that Jesus emphasizes that he is a good shepherd shows that there are bad shepherds. Those he calls “hired hand” in verse 12 of our passage. Jesus declares that the hired hand abandons the sheep and runs when they see danger because they don’t own the sheep.

Jesus goes on to tell us that he has other sheep that are not of the sheep pen. What Jesus was saying at that time to his disciples was that the gospel of salvation will not be limited to the Jews only but will be extended to non-Jewish people – to you and I. We are among the people whom Jesus has brought into the flock of God.

Jesus is commissioning us as members of the sheep pen to go forth and invite others into the sheepfold. Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8 that when the Holy Spirit will come upon us, we shall become his witnesses all over the world. Last Sunday, he told us that we are witnesses to all that has happened to him and all that he has done. And two weeks ago, Jesus commissioned us saying that he is sending us as the Father had sent him.

Today the Presbyterian Church in Canada is celebrating Mission Awareness Sunday. Mission is a specific task that an individual or a group of people have been charged with. It is a calling and a vocation for Christians for all ages. There is no retirement age for mission; we always have to find a way to reach out to others.

As Christians we have been charged to proclaim the gospel throughout the world and make disciples of all people beginning with our communities. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 called us to do so. The mission of the church is a continuation of Christ’s earthly ministry and two Sundays ago he told us that “as my Father sent me, so I am sending you.”

This is a great reminder and opportunity for us to enforce our call to mission. Our churches have different mission units and one of those is the AMS whose purpose is to glorify God and to support with prayer, study and service, mission endeavours through the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces and the Presbyteries within its bounds.

There are so many ways in which we can support our AMS. We could become members of the AMS even if we can't attend the meeting. Those who attend the meeting can update us on what was discussed in the meetings to keep us abreast. We can also support them financially. My prayer is that we all prayerfully find ways in which we can support the mission society of our church and how we can reach out to those who need to hear the gospel in our society.

Jesus is our good shepherd and our Lord and Saviour. The one who willingly laid down his life for us and for those who are not of the sheep pen. He is commissioning us to help find the sheep that are still out there who belong to the flock of God. There are so many lost sheep out there longing and hoping to be found and brought into the sheep pen and it is our responsibility to go in search for them. Some of them are present in our homes, communities, workplace and other places where we go to. We should be proud of our good shepherd and be excited to invite others to him. May God grant us the grace and ability to honour the call to mission.

On behalf of the AMS I use this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported them thus far and also those who have supported with the envelop contributions for this Sunday. May God bless you and keep you. Amen.

Prayers

Dearest Lord, Holy Lamb of God, Shepherd of the world, You lead us to respite and relief. You are our provider and sustainer and through Your providence, we will never want for Your Presence. You lead us to fields of plenty and You refresh our souls with the cool clear waters of Your spirit.

Holy Lamb of God, You are the Good Shepherd. We follow You Lord because we know Your voice. We know that You will lead us through the valley of the shadow of death. You are Yourself the Gate - we can only come to the Throne of Grace through You. And You are truly with us - Emmanuel, God with us - so we will not fear evil but be comforted. You came to give us life and give it to us abundantly. You have prepared Your table for us and anoint us for service. Anoint us with Your Holy Spirit: help us to devote ourselves to Your good teachings, to worship, to fellowship and to prayer. We eat the food that You have given us, both spiritual and physical and You nourish us.

Holy Lamb of God, today we pray for our sisters and brothers, especially for those who suffer. We pray for the children - those who live in plenty, but also for those who live in want. We pray for all of those who live alone, the homebound and the aged. We pray for those who are absent from us - those who live far away or are stationed in far places and live in great danger or those who are absent from us even though we share a house with them. We pray for those who grieve and mourn. We pray for those who are imprisoned by addiction or disease.

Almighty God, in whom we live and move and have our being, we praise you today. God of love and grace, we are here because you have called us. You have called us to be your disciples, to glorify you and to rejoice in service.

Gracious God, we confess there have been times when we have failed to follow your commandments and have fallen short of being your disciples. God of healing and wholeness we bring to you our fear, our brokenness, our sins and despair knowing you will make broken lives whole, forgive our sins, and surround us with your love: a love so great that you gave your son so we may believe and spend eternity with you.

On this Mission Awareness Sunday, help us to be more aware of the needs of others and help us to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ through our words and actions, to bring hope and relieve suffering through compassionate service, and to build partnerships with people in other countries. Help us in advocating for justice and peace and sharing God's unconditional love for all persons. Loving God, we pray for all our AMS auxiliaries in the Atlantic Synod as they continue in faithful service to you.

We pray for our country, province and communities and those in leadership. Guide and direct their decisions. We pray, O God, for the nations of the world, that you would guide their rulers to help them and help us to see the world and all of its children as yours—people who need enough food, clean air, a safe environment, meaningful work and empowering education.

In all times and seasons, we give glory to the God of all creation, to Jesus Christ, the Son, and to the Holy Spirit by whose presence all are blessed.

Now let us join our voices together as we pray the prayer Jesus taught:

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 evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.