

**First Presbyterian Church, Portage la Prairie
Service Script
April 25, 2021**

The Approach

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

May the Peace of Christ be you

A copy of the Announcements is available at the back of the Church for those who did not receive it by email. I'll highlight a few of them now.

- **I want to thank Wally Kimpton and Debbi Miles for being the Greeters this month**
- **This Week in First Church: the Bible Study on Tuesday, 7:00 p.m by Zoom**
- **Coming Up is the Spring Dinner on Sunday, 2 May at 5:00 p.m. This will be done as a take-out. Contact Lisa Sneesby for more information**

Please remain seated throughout the service, I will now light the Christ Candle

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Please join me in the Call to Worship, as shown on the display

Call to Worship (responsive):

Jesus the Christ said, I am the Good Shepherd.

All: We have come to follow him.

We gather in the name of the One who leads us by still waters.

All: We have come to be restored in him.

We gather in the name of the One who prepares a banquet for us.

All: We have come to be fed by his love, so let us worship God

Let us worship God

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Let us now sing Hymn #11, The Lord is my shepherd

Let us bow our heads together in prayer, followed by saying the Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Approach and Confession

Lord God, our good and loving shepherd,

You nourish our lives and lead us into green pastures.

You restore our souls with rest and peace.

You give us true joy so our cup overflows with goodness.

You walk with us through the darkest valleys,

offering us courage and compassion.

At all times and in all circumstances, you are with us,

Creator, Redeemer and Guiding Spirit,

so we praise you, Holy One, now and always. Amen.

Patient God, your mercy is abundant and your love endless.

Trusting in your mercy,

we confess that often we have not shown your love to others,

even though we claim it for ourselves.

You have called us to show compassion,

but too often we are quick to judge others.

You have been called to follow Jesus,

yet we are distracted by our own plans and desires.

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**Forgive us for falling short of your hopes for us
and renew a right spirit within us.**

The Lord's Prayer (KJV - "debts" and "debtors")

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in 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, and the power, and the glory, forever.

Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The mercy of our God is from everlasting to everlasting.

Friends, hear and believe the good news of the gospel.

In Jesus Christ, God's generous love reaches out to embrace us.

We are forgiven and set free to begin again.

Let us give thanks for God's most generous love.

Please join me in singing Hymn #356

The Word Proclaimed

Prayer for Illumination (sung): (#500, v. 2)

Open my ears, that I may hear voices of truth thou sendest clear;
and, while the wave-notes fall on my ear,
ev'rything false will disappear.
Silently, now, I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears; illumine me, Spirit divine!

Scripture Readings:

Acts 4:5–12

⁵ The next day the Jewish leaders, the elders, and the teachers of the Law gathered in Jerusalem. ⁶ They met with the High Priest Annas and with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the others who belonged to the High Priest's family. ⁷ They made the apostles stand before them and asked them, "How did you do this? What power do you have or whose name did you use?"

⁸ Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, answered them, "Leaders of the people and elders: ⁹ if we are being questioned today about the good deed done to the lame man and how he was healed, ¹⁰ then you should all know, and all the people of Israel should know, that this man stands here before you completely well through the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth—whom you crucified and whom God raised from death. ¹¹ Jesus is the one of whom the scripture says,

*'The stone that you the builders despised
turned out to be the most important of all.'*

¹² Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us."

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Psalm 23

- 1. The Lord is my shepherd;
I have everything I need.**

- 2. He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.**

- 3. He gives me new strength.
He guides me in the right paths,
as he has promised.**

- 4. Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, Lord,
for you are with me.
Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me**

- 5. You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honored guest
and fill my cup to the brim.**

- 6. I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.**

Amen

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1 John 3:16–24

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for others! ¹⁷ If we are rich and see others in need, yet close our hearts against them, how can we claim that we love God? ¹⁸ My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

¹⁹ This, then, is how we will know that we belong to the truth; this is how we will be confident in God's presence. ²⁰ If our conscience condemns us, we know that God is greater than our conscience and that he knows everything. ²¹ And so, my dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, we have courage in God's presence. ²² We receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²³ What he commands is that we believe in his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as Christ commanded us. ²⁴ Those who obey God's commands live in union with God and God lives in union with them. And because of the Spirit that God has given us we know that God lives in union with us.

John 10:11–18

¹¹ "I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. ¹² When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³ The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵ I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. ¹⁶ There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become^[a] one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷ "The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. ¹⁸ No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do."

Let us now sing Hymn #485

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Sermon: "The Good Sheppard"

Prayer for Understanding

God of Story and Song, through the scriptures you have taught us of your love, and lifted our hearts in praise. Send us your Holy Spirit as we listen to the witness of your people, so that we may claim the story of your redeeming love again and praise you with our lives through Christ, our Lord and Guide. Amen.

In today's Bible readings we have

- 1. Peter and the Apostles proclaiming to the Jewish leaders, the elders, and the teachers of the Law that it was through the power of Jesus Christ that they were able to heal a lame man.**
- 2. The writer of Psalm 23 compares God to a shepherd who takes care of him.**
- 3. The Apostle John, in his letter, telling Christians that we know what love is through Christ example of self sacrifice and that we should follow Christ's example.**
- 4. And finally, we have Jesus telling us that he is the Good Shepherd, who takes care of his flock even to the point of laying down his life for his sheep.**

There is a lot to think about in these readings. I am going to concentrate on the idea of Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

Jesus as the Good Shepherd is a powerful image and example to Christians. He is not only describing his relationship with the Church, but also how Christians should when they have responsibilities for others.

The idea that people sometimes act like sheep is an old one and pretty accurate in many situations. So the first lesson I see in Jesus' description of himself as a Good Shepherd is realism. A Christian should recognize that people often need guidance, and that we especially need God's guidance in our lives.

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The next lesson is that guiding the flock is a grave responsibility; Christ said he was willing to die for his flock. He is not like the hired hand who abandons his responsibility when it becomes dangerous. This is a powerful example of self sacrifice for us Christians.

Another lesson is that the dangers are real; there are wolves who seek to scatter the flock and eat them. I find the imagery here interesting since while groups of people can act like sheep in a herd, they can also act like wolves in a pack. Christ reminds us that our adversaries - that is. those who oppose Christ and his message - are like wolves: organized and dangerous.

Christ mentions that not all his sheep are in the enclosure and he will need to bring them in. This statement is especially relevant for Mission Awareness Sunday since what Jesus was saying is that one of the responsibilities that the shepherds of the Christian flock have, is to spread Christ's message and bring the lost sheep back into the fold.

Finally, Jesus returns to the theme of his willingness to die for his flock and how he has chose this path of his own free will. When Jesus said these words, his death and resurrection we still in the future. He was warning his followers of what was to come and letting them know that this was God's will and his own. From this, I see the final lesson for the shepherds of the Christian community; we should first seek God's will before fulfilling our responsibilities. We are here to serve God and our fellow humans, not just ourselves.

Thank you for listening, let's now sing Hymn #759

The Response

Prayers of the People

Charlie Clifford will now lead us in the Prayers of the People

Offering

St. John reminds us that because Jesus laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for him. What we offer today is not such a complete sacrifice, but

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our gifts show our love and commitment in gratitude for what Christ has given for us.

Since we are not passing the offering plate around, let us proceed directly to sing the Doxology, the words are on the screen

Doxology:

**He is Lord! He is Lord!
He is risen from the dead, and he is Lord!
Ev'ry knee shall bow, ev'ry tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord! (#252)**

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication

God, you are our Shepherd, strong and wise. We offer our gifts to you, asking you to bless them. Multiply their impact in the world to accomplish your will. May they be used wisely in mission and service, here in our community and through the outreach of The Presbyterian Church in Canada and its partners for the sake of Christ, our Risen Lord. Amen.

Let us now sing Hymn #251

Commissioning and Blessing

Go now with Christ's blessing. Remember His example when you go about in your daily lives and as you fulfill your Christian duty.

God bless you all

Choral Amen #780