



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

Phone / fax: 604-433-1515

Website: www.graceburnaby.com

Email: office@graceburnaby.com

pastor@graceburnaby.com

Follow us on Twitter! @GraceLutBurnaby



**Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 30, 2023
Now the Feast and Celebration
Hymnal Supplement (1991)**

Today is sometimes called “Good Shepherd Sunday.” Jesus is called the “gate” of the sheep in today’s gospel. The risen Christ opens the way to abundant life. He anoints our heads with oil and guides us beside the still waters of our baptism. Each Sunday he spreads a feast before us amid the world’s violence and war. We go forth to be signs of the resurrection and extend God’s tender care to all creation.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and on-line with us today! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God’s calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God’s mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in the name of the Lord our Shepherd, in whom we have no wants or fears. For in God our needs are met as we are led to green pastures and still waters, where our souls are restored onto the right pathways of life. We are also protected and comforted by God's presence in our community, allowing goodness and mercy to pursue us throughout our days. And so we worship and praise God and give thanks for this good news in this house of the Lord, and we place our faith in Christ, our Good Shepherd, this day and always. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Saviour, like a Shepherd Lead Us (#789)

GREETING

The comforting grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the shepherding love of God,
and the welcoming fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

NOW THE FEAST (HS p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God you call us by name and we listen to your voice. May the gate be opened for us that we might enter into your realm where we can have life, and have it abundantly, through Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 2:42-47

A reading from Acts.

Today's reading is a description of life in the community following Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit was poured out on God's people. The new community is sustained in worship and fellowship, shares what they have, and ensures that everyone has enough.

⁴²[The baptized] devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 23

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

²**The LORD makes me lie down in green pastures
and leads me beside still waters.**

³You restore my soul, O LORD,

and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

⁴**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall 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, and my cup is running over.

⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 2:19-25

A reading from 1 Peter.

Doing the right things does not guarantee that one will not experience difficulties, hardships, rejection, or even suffering. Here Christ is presented as the model for our path of endurance and loyalty to God, particularly amid adversity.

¹⁹It is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. ²⁰If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps.

²²"He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth."

²³When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (HS p. 8)

GOSPEL: John 10:1-10

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus uses an image familiar to the people of his day to make a point about spiritual leadership. Those who listen to Jesus are led to abundant life.

[Jesus said:] ¹"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. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers."

⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief

comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Loving God, we pray that we be strengthened by your Spirit to be devoted to the teaching of your Word, that we might hear your voice and follow it along paths of righteousness and peace, through Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd. Amen.

So I did a thing earlier this week, something that I’ve been wanting to do for I think maybe about 6 months or so, but I never had the chance to go do it. Maybe I was a bit scared to try, or nervous perhaps. And the timing was never right, because this thing takes a lot of courage, strength, and endurance. See, this thing was to attempt the “giga dragon ramen challenge” at this noodle restaurant out in Richmond.

If you haven’t heard of this challenge, I don’t blame you to be honest. It takes a special type to look out for these things. Anyway, it’s an eating challenge, of course, where you get this giant bowl full of the equivalent of 5 servings of ramen with all the soup and fixin’s, and if you finish it all in under 30 minutes you get it all for free. If you don’t finish, well, then you’ll have to pay. Like with money, not with your life or anything.

Now, I love ramen and I usually eat close to 3 bowls whenever we go, so I knew I had to try this challenge. And the stars finally lined up this past week and I was able to go try. But after a solid 27 minutes of straight eating, I had to throw in the towel. All that was left was about a litre of soup, but honestly I just couldn’t fit anything else in my stomach. You know when they say “if I eat another bite, I’ll pop”? That is literally how I felt, but instead of “pop” it’s “throw up”. I had to stop.

So I failed. I did my best but it wasn’t good enough. I was really looking forward to making it on the restaurant’s Instagram page as a winner and be included in the elite club that can eat just a stupid amount of food in one sitting. But instead, I hang my head in shame because I couldn’t do it. I wasn’t good enough. I failed.

This time, at least. But next time I’ll be more prepared...

I know, this is just some goofy challenge that just seems more wasteful than anything else, but I’m drawn to them. Maybe it’s because I like to challenge myself and push my boundaries. Maybe it’s because I like to test the limits of my capabilities. Or maybe it’s because I like the thought of free food. But really, deep down, I have a feeling it’s because I just want to feel like I belong.

Belong? What on earth kind of place would I need to eat a giant bowl of ramen to belong to? And I don’t know if I can even answer that, but I know that it felt like I needed to do something in order to prove myself, show myself that I am capable of extraordinary things, that... I don’t know... that I’m worthy of something.

You know, now that I say that I think this is probably something I should discuss with my therapist.

Either case, I think all of us have this need for belonging... somewhere... anywhere. Most of us find that belonging early in life in our families but as the teen years go we sort of grow out of that and look for belonging elsewhere. Maybe it's in a fraternity or sorority. Maybe it's in some club, or guild, or maybe even a labour union or something. All of these things, it feels, are set up to meet that need to belong, for good or bad.

And as proof of belonging, sometimes we're required to get some sort of marking or identification or something that sets us apart. Maybe it's to wear a certain colour or article of clothing, or some sort of ID or membership card, or even getting a specific haircut or tattoo. Maybe it's learning a secret handshake, or a password of some kind, or to recite a creed. Or maybe there is some kind of initiation, hazing, entrance exam, or some other ritual that is required. And honestly, if it helps us to belong, we'd be glad to do them.

Because really, it feels good to belong, doesn't it? It feels good to soar together with the other eagles, to pack with the other wolves, to flock with the other sheep. And so this passage that we get out of John 10 feels good to listen to, especially on this day that is often known as Good Shepherd Sunday. What's not to like? Jesus gives us a beautiful picture of him caring for us, his flock, protecting us as the gate to our pen, and preventing robbers and thieves and other ruffians from getting into our nice little elite group of God's favourites.

Ok, maybe we won't admit aloud that's how we see this passage, but isn't that kind of how it's been taught to us? The art that we see of Jesus as the Good Shepherd are always full of warm fuzzy feelings. This day is deeply associated with Psalm 23, which is like the most widely used and known Psalm ever. And even the whole profession of shepherd has been totally cleaned up and romanticized because of the parallels we have made with Jesus. But don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that Jesus as shepherd isn't peaceful and feel good, but I just don't know if it's because of how we see it.

Let me explain. Often we think that Jesus as shepherd is to guard us, protect us, and separate us from the evils of the world, those who do wrong from us who do good, those sinners from us saints, those goats from us sheep. We often assume that Jesus is more like a gate keeper where he opens the door, the only door into God's kingdom for only those who deserve to belong. You know, those that follow the rules, believe the right things, and gone through the proper rituals and have the proper credentials. We like to think that Jesus has this checklist with which he, and we, can determine who is in and who isn't.

But if we look at this particular passage where Jesus is more the Good Gate than the Good Shepherd, where he does say that he is the way into the pen and those who climb the fence and enter a different way are wrong, we can see that he doesn't actually say what it means to enter through him. He doesn't say what it means to know his voice. He doesn't really say what it means to follow him.

I think the answers to these are in the other passages we get for today. The story out of Acts telling us how the early church, a true testament to community, lived by sharing, caring, and serving. Peter's sermon out of the second reading reminds us of how Jesus lived peaceably even when wronged and suffering injustice. So entering into the kingdom and belonging isn't

about following rules and checking off checklists and proving to others how we're better than they are, but it's about living like Jesus lived in a compassionate way, sharing like Jesus shared with grace and thanksgiving, and treating others like Jesus does with forgiveness and love.

The point is that our belonging to God in God's flock isn't about earning our place, proving ourselves, or forcing our way in, but it is something that is already given to us as we are invited to walk with Christ along still waters and green pastures. And as we do that we see how we are provided for, how we are loved, and just how much we belong regardless of how we are regarded in the world. And in it all, Jesus continues to lead and guide us along pathways of righteousness, joining us together as a community, and reminding us of how his voice can be heard and his face seen in all things that are good and true, lifting us up in blessing and strengthening us to be God's people in the world.

And so we needn't worry about how we can coax Jesus to open the gates for us, what rules we have to adhere to, or what rituals we should uphold. But we can trust that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, has already opened the gate for us and all people, inviting and welcoming with arms of grace and love, and teaching us to recognise his hand at work in our lives, in our community, and throughout the world. Not to show us what we're doing wrong and condemn us, but to set an example of right relationship, compassionate fellowship, and resurrection living in which we all find belonging.

So in this season of Easter and resurrection, may we find peace in our belonging in God's fold, knowing that who we are in Christ will never change or falter, that we might joyfully serve God and neighbour for the sake of the good news of God's love in the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: My Shepherd, You Supply My Need (#782)

CREED (HS p. 11)

Together with all of God's fold, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's 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 INTERCESSION

Led to hear and listen to God's voice, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your shepherding mercy, O God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you are our shepherd and in you we do not want, for you provide for our needs and you strengthen our faith. May our ministry to each other reflect the good news of your love, that your gospel can be seen and heard by all. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our church the ELCIC with our bishops Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan; our pastors across the country and all congregations and ministries. In particular we pray for out of our BC Synod: St. Peter's Estonian Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their interim pastor Andres Rebaine; and for Peace Lutheran Church in Vernon and their pastor David Hunter. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your creation restores our souls as we see the beauty and serenity of its green pastures and still waters, and all the wonders of all that you have made. May our care for this planet be pleasing to you, that our stewardship lead us deeper into appreciation and faith. We pray for those living in areas prone to harsh weather or natural disasters, that they find safety from the elements. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, even in the face of the evils of the world, we shall not fear for we know that you watch over and comfort us. But we pray for all world leaders, politicians, and people of influence that we all might one day learn to live in peace in spite of difference. We also pray for wisdom and guidance on countries and nations that face violence, war, or turmoil, and we lift up those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you anoint us with your goodness and mercy until our cups are running over, and you heal us in our times of need. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your loving presence and blessing be apparent to us all. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Bev and family; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Raj; Sukhwant; Winn; Eleanor; John; Laura; Kandie; Cindy; Thomas; William; Chris; Walter; Larry; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you are with us all the days of our lives and you welcome us to dwell in your house forever with you and all the saints. May our lives on this planet be informed by the lives of faith that we've loved and lost, and we might all move toward a better future as you have envisioned in the church and all the world. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and guidance, shown to us by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who leads us along right pathways to experience your love and peace, joining us with the choirs of angels, hosts of heaven, and church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (HS p. 15)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Yes Lord, you are holy and mighty and you are all things to all people. You lead us and guide us toward peace and righteousness, and you deliver us from harm and evil. And in the fullness of time, you send to us Jesus, your Son, to shepherd us into your kingdom and community with all the saints, full of your grace and forgiveness.

For on the night that he was betrayed, it was your Son Jesus who sat with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke, and shared it saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And after they ate he took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink from saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this bread and cup that we see Jesus present with us, affirming our position in God's family, lifting us up out of isolation and loneliness, and reminding us of this the basis of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, through your Son, our Good Shepherd Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (HS p. 18)

Shepherded together as one body by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,**

on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see God present among us and joining us together.
Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (HS p. 18)
Shepherd Me, O God (#780)
The Lord's My Shepherd (#778)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding us and nourishing us with all that you are and give, lifting us up to see you in the world and strengthening us to proclaim your love. Continue to be with us in our journey, that we be inspired and informed by your love and grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who calls us by name lead us out in green pastures and still waters, and bless us all in the safety of Christ's fold.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: What a Fellowship, What a Joy Divine (#774)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be pursued by God's goodness and mercy.
Thanks be to God.