

Worship Plan for Sunday, April 30, 2023

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Introduction to the day

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.

GOSPEL MESSAGE

April 30, 2023

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Tables Spread for Life Abundant

Sometimes a table is spread in a generous fashion but still feels impersonal, like the buffet at a big conference. You can fill your plate as many times as you want, but that doesn’t change the fact that you’re wearing a printed name tag because no one in the room actually knows your name.

And sometimes a table spread seems meager because it’s the end of the month or you didn’t have time to make it to the store, but you’re with friends who feel like family, so no one is worried about how simple the meal is.

Today we have the best of both worlds. We have abundance to the point of extravagance, and we have a God who knew our names even before we were born. We have a table heaped with grace upon grace and our heads anointed with oil, and we have a God whose voice we recognize as soon as we hear our names spoken aloud. All our beloveds have been invited, and every last one of us has a name card in front of our plates, handwritten in our favorite color, no doubt. Today we’re reminded that even when the world feels like a wreck, God shows up with abundance, inviting us by name.

Where have you noticed this lately? Where have you noticed goodness and mercy following you around? Where have you noticed evidence that God wants you to experience life? In the feisty weeds poking up through the cracks in the sidewalks? In the hope of the students who are so close to summer break they can taste it? In the bright sunshine breaking through the clouds not thirty seconds after the thunder stops? In the youngest members of your worshipping community, skipping forward with their hands outstretched for bread and blessing?

It’s there, this evidence of God’s life abundant. Go looking for it. Go looking to remind someone else. It’s way too good to miss.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

BELL RINGING

WELCOME AND INTRO TO THE DAY

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

GATHERING SONG (ELW p. 203)

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

EASTER CALL TO WORSHIP (FROM PR D+)

CANTICLE OF PRAISE -- REPLACE WITH EASTER SONG (ELW p. 204)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

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.

Amen.

TEMPLE TALK -- VINA MOSES

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.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

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.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION -- SOMETHING WITH ALLELUIA IN IT! ELW 172 OR ACS 1088 OR? (ELW p. 205)

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.

CHILDREN'S TIME

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY (ELW p. 206)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

You are the shepherd who gathers us in your mighty and loving arms. Help your church to listen for your voice, especially when the voices of sin, idolatry, and oppression threaten to overpower us. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

The green pastures, still waters, and dark valleys of this earth all belong to you, O Lord. Sustain your creation with a love that is both mighty and just. Where there is destruction, bring healing. Where there is desolation, bring abundance. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You proclaim shepherding love, comfort, and protection for all people and all of creation. Direct leaders in our own time to learn from your example and instruction. Give them servant hearts, that they generously seek the good of all. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You journey with us wherever our paths may lead. We pray for those feeling overwhelmed by anxiety or depression or suffering in any way (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You are the sheepgate that gives safety to your beloved flocks. Provide protection for refugees, victims of domestic violence, those who are imprisoned, and all people who are vulnerable to violence and mistreatment. (*Local concerns may be named.*) Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You call your sheep by name and lead them through the valley of death. We give you thanks for those who have died and now dwell in your house forever (*especially*). Be with those who mourn, and give them hope in the promise of resurrection. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ's resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

MEAL

OFFERING

OFFERING MEDITATION MUSIC (ELW p. 206)

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Blessed are you, O God, ruler of heaven and earth. Day by day you shower us with blessings. As you have raised us to new life in Christ, give us glad and generous hearts, ready to praise you and to respond to those in need, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy, living, and loving God,

we praise you for creating the heavens and the earth.

We bless you for bringing Noah and his family through the waters of the flood,
for freeing your people Israel from the bonds of slavery,
and for sending your Son to be our Redeemer.

We give you thanks for Jesus
who, living among us,
healed the sick,
fed the hungry,
and with a love stronger than death,
gave his life for others.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, 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.

Remembering, therefore,
his life-giving death and glorious resurrection,
we await your promised life for all this dying world.

Breathe your Spirit on us and on this bread and cup:
carry us in your arms from death to life,

that we may live as your chosen ones,
clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
in your holy Church,
both now and forever.

Amen

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one 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

Come and know Christ,
broken and poured out for you.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION SONG (ELW p. 208)

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you suffered death our lives to save: have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mercy now, we pray.**

**O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world away;
eternal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION -- IN UNISON

Let us pray.

Life-giving God, in the mystery of Christ's resurrection you send light to conquer darkness,
water to give new life, and the bread of life to nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses

to your Son's resurrection, that we may show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

The God of all,
who raised ✝ Jesus from the dead,
bless you by the power of the Holy Spirit
to live in the new creation.

Amen.

SENDING SONG (ELW p. 209)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve the Risen One.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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