**Good Shepherd and Confirmation Sunday**

*Modified Service of the Word*

May 3, 2020

***Preservice Music and Bell Peal***

**Opening Hymn: CW # 436** *Jesus, Shepherd of the Sheep*

1 **Jesus, Shepherd of the sheep, Who your Father’s flock does keep,**

**Safe we wake and safe we sleep, Guarded still by you.**

2 **In your promise firm we stand; None can take us from your hand.**

**Speak—we hear—at your command, We will follow you.**

3 **By your blood our souls were bought; By your life salvation wrought;**

**By your light our feet are taught, Lord, to follow you.**

4 **Father, draw us to your Son; We with joy will follow on**

**Till the work of grace is done, There to live with you.**

5 **We, in robes of glory dressed, Join th’ assembly of the blest,**

**Gathered to eternal rest In the fold with you.**

Text: Henry Cook, 1788–1868, alt.

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

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. We, therefore, confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

**C: Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: The perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ has removed our guilt forever. We are, therefore, God’s children and will continue to live for him. Amen.

In the joy of this relationship with our God we pray…

O Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Good Shepherd who laid down your life for the sheep. Lead us now to the still waters of your life-giving Word that we may abide in your Father’s house forever, for you live and reign eternally with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen**

**First Lesson** : Acts 6:1-9; 7:2,51-60 (EHV)

*Christian faith is not merely a matter of the heart. Faith pushes us into action: from simple forms of love and concern for others to committed witness concerning Christ. Faith trusts that the Savior is always watching over us, even if our life of faith should bring us rejection. Our Confirmands (and all of us) should be encouraged by this truth.*

In those days, as the number of disciples was increasing, a complaint arose from the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebrew-speaking Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve called together the whole group of disciples and said, “It is not right for us to neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, carefully select from among you seven men with good reputations, who are full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. We will put them in charge of this service. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

5 This proposal pleased the entire group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte from Antioch. 6 They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 The word of God kept on spreading, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly. Also a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

8 Now Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. 9 Some men who were from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia) rose up and disputed with Stephen. 7:2 Stephen said, “Gentlemen, brothers and fathers, listen! 51 “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit! You are doing just what your fathers did. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who prophesied the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers— 53 you who received the law as transmitted by angels, but did not keep it.” 54 When they heard these things, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed up into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 He said, “Look, I see heaven opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” 57 But they screamed at the top of their voices, covered their ears, and rushed at him with one purpose in mind. 58 They threw him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses laid their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 While they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” 60 Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” After he said this, he fell asleep.

**Second Lesson**: I Peter 2:19-25 (EHV)

*Stephen was killed because of his faith and witness. We may not all suffer that extreme of rejection for what we believe, but Peter encourages us to be ready for us, and to accept our trials of faith, even as Jesus endured all for our sakes. He is the Good Shepherd, ready to enfold us in his loving arms.*

For this is favorable: if a person endures sorrows while suffering unjustly because he is conscious of God. 20 For what credit is it to you if you receive a beating for sinning and patiently endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and endure it, this is favorable with God. 21 Indeed, you were called to do this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example so that you would follow in his steps. 22 He did not commit a sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. 23 When he was insulted, he did not insult in return. When he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself carried our sins in his body on the tree so that we would be dead to sins and alive to righteousness. By his wounds you were healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but you are now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

**Easter Proclamation**

M: Alleluia! The Lord is risen!

**C: He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**C: ♫ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia! These words are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

**Gospel Lesson**: John 10:1-10 (EHV)

*Jesus as the Good Shepherd is a word-picture drawn from multiple sources in the Scriptures, but primarily from Jesus’ own words claiming that illustration of himself. The best aspect of the Shepherd is his loving concern for the sheep, and his gift of life by his own sacrifice.*

“Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the door, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought out all his own sheep, he walks ahead of them. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. 5 They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.” 6 Jesus used this illustration in speaking to the people, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

7 So Jesus said again, “Amen, Amen, I tell you: I am the door for the sheep. 8 All who came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 “A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

**Hymn: CW # 375 v. 1, 4-6** *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*

**1 The King of love my shepherd is, Whose goodness fails me never;**

**I nothing lack if I am his, And he is mine forever.**

**4 In death’s dark vale I fear no ill With you, dear Lord, beside me;**

**Your rod and staff my comfort still, Your cross before to guide me.**

**5 You spread a table in my sight, A banquet here bestowing;**

**Your oil of welcome, my delight; My cup is overflowing!**

**6 And so through all the length of days Your goodness fails me never.**

**Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise Within your house forever!**

Text: Henry W. Baker, 1821–77, alt.

**Sermon: What Makes our Good Shepherd “Good”?** John 10:27, 28

Many years ago, author Victor Hugo wrote the novel, “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”. The main character lived in the bell tower of that cathedral. He was an orphan given the name “Quasimodo” because of the day on which he was found. That day was “Quasimodo geniti” Sunday, the first Sunday after Easter. That title comes from the Latin words beginning the traditional epistle lesson of the day, I Peter 2:2: “Quasimodo geniti infanti…” “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk….”

You may know that all the Sundays of the church year have a Latin name, based on the Scripture readings. One of Easter’s Sundays is “Jubilate!”, a term meaning “rejoice!” Not a bad thought as we mentally return to the meaning and purpose of Easter—the joyful news of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead!

But the Sundays of the church year also have an English name—which will naturally make more sense to us. This Sunday is “Good Shepherd” Sunday. That’s because the traditional gospel lesson is taken from John chapter 10, the “Good Shepherd” chapter of the Bible. Here are a few snippets from other parts of chapter 10: “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (v11) “I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” (v 14) “The reason the Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again.” (v 17) If those aren’t reasons to “jubilate”, I don’t know what is.

These pictures of sheep and shepherds, of course, meant a lot to the people of Palestine, for many made their living caring for sheep. We certainly remember the shepherds around Bethlehem those many months ago. Since few of us are shepherds, we may have to think about the point God is making a little bit more. But still the picture can be meaningful.

So, imagine you were the owner of a large flock and needed some extra shepherds. If you were looking to hire, what qualities would you be looking for?

Maybe something obvious would be the ability to recognize which sheep are yours, so that you are taking care of the right ones. We would want a sensitivity to the sheep’s needs and the knowledge where to get them food or water.

But there is one outstanding characteristic which makes a shepherd “good”. In 1 Samuel we hear that the boy David took off after a lion and a bear which had snatched a few of his flock. When he caught up with them, he killed the beasts almost barehanded and rescued his sheep. David cared so much for the sheep that he was willing to face death to protect them.

If Jesus is to be our shepherd, what are his qualities? What makes our shepherd “good”? In our text we see that: 1) Jesus knows his sheep, 2) Jesus cares for his sheep, and 3) Jesus gave his life to give his sheep life. He’s a really good shepherd!

So, first, Christ knows who his sheep are. In an earlier verse of John 10, he says that a good shepherd “calls his own sheep by name,” (v 3). Each of us received a name from our parents. When we were baptized, our names were written in God’s book of life. Jesus knows the names in that book.

However, we may know the names of many people, but do we really know the person? For example, we may know that Donald Trump and Tony Evers are leaders of the nation and state. But how many of us know each man’s height, or the color of his eyes, let alone their likes and dislikes? Jesus knows us perfectly. He says, “Even the very hairs on your head are numbered,” (Matthew 10:30). That’s got to be a comfort! If he knows which of my hairs is falling out, he’s aware of all my needs. He’s thinking about what’s best for me.

We, on the other hand, also know Jesus. Christ speaks, “I know my sheep and my sheep know me,” (v 14). True, we don’t have the all-surpassing knowledge Jesus does, but we do know a lot, don’t we? First, we know how well he knows us. We know his concern for us. We know he will do anything to keep us safe. We know him the way real sheep know their real shepherd—they experience the shepherd’s care and learn to trust him. We listen.

When Jesus says, “My sheep listen to my voice,” he means just that. He doesn’t say sometimes they listen and sometimes they don’t. I know that in our sinful natures we are fickle, but sheep of Christ are listening. When services are held—Lord willing, soon again—his sheep gather to hear his voice. When Jesus’ body and blood are offered in Holy Communion, his sheep come to eat and to drink this precious food. It means that our Bibles at home get opened to listen to Jesus’ words.

On this Confirmation Sunday, we remember our days in those classes. Those assignments of memory work were never just busy work—they were “confirming”, that is, “strengthening” our knowledge and our trust in Christ. Confirmation is more than just a custom, or a revenge upon our children—if I had to do it, you have to do it, too! No, every opportunity we have to get into contact with the Word of Christ, is always good. The more we hear him, the better we recognize his voice.

There are certainly others who call for us. Jesus warns of false prophets and false shepherds who lead astray. It’s easy to pick out some false shepherds as Mohammed, or the Bhudda. Others may require more careful listening to know their errors, but Christ encourages, “By their fruit you will know them,” (Matthew 7:16). As we listen closely to Christ, we’ll learn which one to follow.

And as we follow him, we will be led along paths which lead to life. One long-time favorite portion of Scripture—that one about shepherds! —is Psalm 23. David describes himself as a sheep in God’s flock. The whole psalm describes the care and concern the Lord has for his sheep.

The first verses share the Lord’s care for physical needs. “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He causes me to lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,” (vv. 1,2). Just as a real shepherd guides his sheep to food and water when they need it, so Jesus carefully watches over us. Hungry? Thirsty? In need of clothing or shelter? Are you struggling in this economy? Challenged by illness? We have experienced his supply for our needs in the past. Ask for, and then trust the future care.

The remaining four verses of Psalm 23 essentially describe the Lord’s care for our spiritual needs. They begin with “he restores my soul.” When we stray, he goes out to find us and bring us back. When we sin, his blood covers our sin. Even when we walk in that “valley of the shadow of death”, he is there at our side protecting our souls from harm; and when we die, takes our soul in his arms and carries us to heaven where we “will live in the house of the Lord forever.” In the past 12 months 5 members of Our Savior’s have been collected into his arms and are enjoying the greatest jubilation possible.

We are Christ’s sheep, and we have his promise, “No one will snatch them out of my hand.” Satan snatches at us by direct attacks of ridicule by family and friends. He will seek to grab us by the cares of this world. He will send those false shepherds to mislead us if they can.

And if we were left on our own, Isaiah’s words would become even more true: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray,” (53:6). But thanks to God, Jesus guides us with his hand. His strong arm holds us in line.

If we are dismayed at the state of the world, we can take comfort in God’s words: “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you,” (Isaiah 41:10). Satan is no match for the one who has already crushed Satan’s head at the cross.

Isn’t that one of the qualities we identified earlier? A sign of a truly good shepherd—the kind you want protecting your flock—he’s willing to sacrifice himself for the sheep. David was willing to put his life on the line for his own sheep. Good Friday makes our shepherd “Good”.

God could have rightly abandoned us to Satan since we so often wandered away from him. But because Christ’s offering satisfied God’s anger against sin, he places his arms around us and draws us to safety. God leads us away from Satan and the abyss of hell. Jesus laid down his life for the sheep. Isn’t that a Good Shepherd?

As a good and giving shepherd, Christ surpasses David. While David certainly prolonged the life of his flock, they all eventually died, and even their shepherd died. But Christ gives eternal life—life which never ends. Our text promises Jesus’ sheep will never perish. The actual Greek words pile up emphatic negatives. We might get closer to the Greek by putting it this way: “Jesus’ sheep will never, ever, perish, not ever, no how!” God guarantees that the life he gives will never be taken away.

One chapter further on from this text we find Jesus at the tomb of his friend. Jesus assured Martha, the sister of Lazarus, “I am the resurrection and the life. he who believes in me will live, even though he dies,” (John 11:24). And if Jesus ever makes such a bold statement, he backs it up! Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb—and Lazarus came!

At the moment of the death of someone close to us, the stress makes it hard to remember that. But our Savior assures us, “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out,” (John 5:28,29). It’s not just a Lazarus thing, it’s an everyone thing! What a joy to know that our Shepherd gave his life, to make these words of promise ring true. The proof is in his own resurrection. It’s the Easter message all over again. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, will see to it that we will live again.

What joy to know our Shepherd! He knows us: who we are, what we are like and what we need. He cares for us body and soul; and will not let anyone or anything snatch us out of his hand. He gave up his life to guarantee our life. This Sunday needs a new name: let’s call it BEST Shepherd Sunday! AMEN.

**Confession of Faith--Apostles’ Creed**

**I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

**Prayer of the Church**

Dear Jesus, risen Savior, truly you are our Good Shepherd, for you gave your life for us, your sheep. It was your great love for us that brought you to earth to suffer, to die and to rise again, that we might have the life that never ends.

We confess that we have a rebellious Old Adam that is stubborn and resists your lovingly leading voice. Good Shepherd, deliver us from our sinful ways, protect us from our own foolishness, and forgive our many sins.

Take, also, all the evils and dangers which beset us and turn them to our good. By your continual presence comfort and cheer us in every journey we must make through the dark, shadowy valleys of this life. When we are oppressed by troubles, distress, temptations, sickness, and heartache--indeed, when life seems too difficult to endure--teach us to turn our eyes to you, the Good Shepherd, and to cast all our cares upon you.

By your grace, reach out to every troubled soul, bring them relief, and by blessing them in this way, may they learn to trust your voice. Send your Spirit among the people of our land and of our world that they may be brought into your sheepfold.

Especially this day we pray for this year’s confirmands, the members of Our Savior’s who promise their faithfulness to you. Extend your grace on all of last year’s confirmand’s, those of the year before, and all the way back to the most aged of our people who once stood before you to promise faithfulness to the end of life, rather than turn away. Keep us all faithful to our Confirmation vow, by your Word and Sacrament.

Where some of have forgotten it, bring to their minds that you never forget us, and are holding out your hands to all, willing our return and the resumption of your blessing.

This grace we ask in your name, and continue in your prayer...

**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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;**

**and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

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

**Hymn: CW # 374** *My Shepherd Will Supply My Need*

**1 My shepherd will supply my need—Jehovah is his name.**

**In pastures fresh he makes me feed Beside the living stream.**

**He brings my wand’ring spirit back When I forsake his ways**

**And leads me, for his mercy’s sake, In paths of truth and grace.**

**2 When I walk through the shades of death, His presence is my stay;**

**One word of his supporting breath Drives all my fears away.**

**His hand, in sight of all my foes, Will still my table spread;**

**My cup with blessings overflows; His oil anoints my head.**

**3 The sure provisions of my God Attend me all my days;**

**Oh, may his house be my abode And all my work be praise**.

**There would I find a settled rest While others go and come,**

**No more a stranger or a guest But like a child at home.**

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748, alt.

**Closing Prayer and Blessing**

Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and to do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with your and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

**C: ♫ Amen. Amen. Amen.**

**Closing Hymn: CW# 432** *I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb*

1 **I am Jesus’ little lamb; Ever glad at heart I am,**

**For my shepherd gently guides me,**

**Knows my needs and well provides me,**

**Loves me ev’ry day the same, Even calls me by my name.**

2 **Day by day, at home, away, Jesus is my staff and stay.**

**When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,**

**Into pleasant pastures leads me;**

**When I thirst, he bids me go Where the quiet waters flow.**

3 **Who so happy as I am, Even now the shepherd’s lamb?**

**And when my short life is ended,**

**By his angel hosts attended,**

**He shall fold me to his breast, There within his arms to rest.**

Text: Henrietta L. von Hayn, 1724–82; tr. composite.

***Announcements***

***Brief Postlude***

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**Notes and News**

**Confirmation:** This year’s confirmands are Sophia Monday and Dayton Mueller. Because of the current limitations on gatherings, they will be confirmed in private ceremonies. We pray for their continued blessings and devotion to the word of Christ. May Confirmation Sunday remind each of us of the promises we made to “be faithful unto death”.

**Memorials:** We offer our sincere thanks for these gifts:

In memory of Valeria Baumann – Michael & Lois Fasse, Robert & Janice Gresens, Carol Smith, Bill & Sue Unruh

In memory of Aunt Ruth Mantick – Elaine Radtke

In memory of Rev. Robert Mueller and Jane Krueger – Bill & Sue Unruh

**Reminder about Council meetings:** Because of our inability to meet face-to-face, the Church council is conducting *weekly* meetings at 7 pm on Monday evenings by short phone conferencing, rather than the usual monthly meetings at church. This will continue at least for the duration of the COVID-19 restrictions. If you have input you would like to give, or a matter for the council to deliberate, please share that by the Friday before with chairman John Durkee, with Pastor Suckow, or with any of the elders who serve the congregation: Travis Kurth (secretary); Tony Sulko (treasurer); Bill Unruh (properties); Shiloh Monday (Family ministry); Charles Newby (Worship); Adam Mueller (Evangelism); and Ethan Hutchinson (School).

**Live Classes:** TELL Network is online bible-based training, bringing the gospel to people around the world! Complete self-led video lessons and then join a live online instructor for further study. This is a WELS resource for instruction in God's word and also a live connection with a pastor for advice and encouragement.

Facebook.com/TELLTruthbringsPeace

Website: tellnetwork.org

**Family Devotions:** WELS Commission on Discipleship is offering devotions developed for the entire family to use. The devotions will coincide with the previous Sunday’s Bible readings. You can subscribe to have the devotions e-mailed to you at [wels.net/subscribe](http://wels.net/subscribe), find them on the WELS Facebook page [fb.com/welslutherans](http://fb.com/welslutherans), or visit [wels.net/family-devotions](http://wels.net/family-devotions).

**Ascension Day Worship:** We will have a special Ascension Day worship service which will be live streamed on facebook on Thursday, May 21 at 6:30 PM. Mark your calendar!