



Pastor Gwen's Message

Sunday, May 3, 2020

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

Christ is Risen.....He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!

Around 1440, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press. It was not long after, that Bibles were being printed and put in the hands of the common man. This caused a paradigm shift in history, sometimes called the printing revolution. No longer would people have to depend on the interpretation of priests to understand the Bible. They could now read it for themselves.

A paradigm shift is a major shift or change in the concepts and practices of how something works or is accomplished, according to Investopedia. With the printing press, people could now read Scripture for themselves, in their homes and hear God's word for themselves. That certainly changed the authority of the religious leaders in those days.

In the early 1600's Galileo determined that the Sun was the center of the universe and not the earth. This dramatically changed the way people viewed the world. Through his telescope Galileo realized that the moons of Jupiter were kept revolving around the planet by a force. That force became known on earth as gravity. This shift in thinking expanded beyond astronomy with the belief that the world was not the center of the universe, which even tested the authority of the Bible.

Can you think of other paradigm shifts that have caused huge changes in our society? How about the 1913 assembly line developed by Ford? That made a huge change in the ways of the world and how things were done. Cars could be produced quicker and more efficiently than ever before.

Another life changing event for the world came on 9-11 2001, when terrorism changed the way we board planes, go into subways, look at nuclear weapons and think about terrorism.

Or how about the internet? It has changed the way we communicate for sure. If you don't have email, you are living in the dark ages. The Internet today, provides the primary source of information. And it also has made us people who expect instant gratification. Everything is at our fingertips. NOW.

Let's think back to the days of Jesus. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd. Was that thought a shift in the paradigm? If Jesus was the Good Shepherd, he would be a great person to follow. After all, the Pharisees and other spiritual leaders were not always the nicest people. They too often took advantage of the commoners by retaining all the power for themselves. People needed to go to these men for healing, forgiveness and sought their permission for just about everything in between.

Could this new idea that Jesus was a good shepherd actually mean that there was a spiritual leader who actually cared about them, a leader who knew their voice? I do think that this idea of a Good Shepherd was a huge paradigm shift for the Israelites and all who were looking for the Messiah that God had promised.

This thought of Jesus as a shepherd meant that all people would be known to Jesus. He would know them personally and they would count. His voice would be familiar. He would care for them. He would have their best interest at heart. He would protect them. That is what it meant for Jesus to be the Good Shepherd.

But for the Pharisees this paradigm shift was not a good one. It promoted the fact that Jesus would take away the power they held over the people. And because of these religious leaders not liking the new thought of Jesus as Good Shepherd, Jesus was put to death. They got rid of him the only way they knew, a permanent way. They hung him on a cross and crucified him. But God had the last word. God's love prevailed and raised Jesus from the dead on the third day.

Our reading from John this morning goes on to say that not only is Jesus the Good Shepherd, but he is also the gatekeeper. Another metaphor. And this one is just as powerful. "I am the gate for the sheep". Jesus is the gate or the door that the sheep must enter through to be saved and find pasture. This to me says

that only through Jesus can we find our way to abundant life, forgiveness and eternal life. There is no other way to enter into the kingdom of God. And in His Kingdom, we will have the promise of life with God, where we find safe haven from a dangerous world. We are the sheep of his own flock and as verse 10 declares. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly."

And now I ask you. Are you able to acknowledge this new paradigm for your life? Do you accept and believe the fact that Jesus is the gateway, the doorway to salvation? Is He the one to whom you go to have true life? To live abundantly?

You know, we use the term abundant life to talk about one of the three gracious realities that God gives promise too in Jesus. Forgiveness and eternal life are the other two. But what about this abundant life? What exactly does that mean. I have spent some time this week thinking about what that means to me.

I recalled a time when I first got here at CTS and was serving communion. I don't remember to whom I served that thin wafer that day, but it dropped on the floor. Without thinking I picked up another wafer from the paten and said, "Don't worry we have a God of abundance." It was just a reaction that came real to me that moment. Folks, our God is a God of abundance. There is never, ever a lack of the love he has for each one of us. He is our shepherd, our Good Shepherd.

To live life abundantly we realize that Jesus goes before us to prepare the way. We realize that Jesus guides us through His Word. We realize that Jesus protects us. And we realize that Jesus tells us whom we are, that we belong to him. To realize all this shows His immense love for us. And when we believe this love, we have life abundant. Nothing or no one can take that away from us.

Jesus is literally the embodiment of God's love. And we are drawn to it. God created a need in all of us to be loved and He provides the true answer in Jesus. We hear the voice of Jesus calling us through his Word, through the witness of others, through the community of the faithful and we believe that His love is real. And not only do we hear and believe, but also we follow. He calls us by name. And we do not know where that call will lead. But we are called to share that love with others.

So I urge you this Easter season, this time when life seems so different with COVID 19 to Listen for God's call. Allow yourself to live into his love. Follow

him. Listen to the voice of the risen Savior. Answer the Good Shepherd's call to love Him and to love one another. **AMEN**