

***St. John Lutheran Church <sup>of</sup>  
Cat Spring***  
**www.stjohncatspring.org**



**May 3, 2020**

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**Greetings from Pastor Bill.** I hope all of you are safe and well in this time of the Covid -19 pandemic health crisis. Even in a time of social distancing, God is faithful in hearing our prayers and gathering us in the unity of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Since we will not be gathering for worship for an indeterminate time, the Council and I are offering materials for worship via email or US Mail. These may be read silently or aloud in a group.

Your prayer request concerns are important. Please communicate these directly to me, to Chairman Ken Wienken, or to any Church Council member.

Please also remember to send your regular offerings either through the mail, or by electronic means with your personal bank account. The church address is **St John Lutheran Church, 480 Ross Street , Cat Spring, 78933.**

## **Order of Worship**

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

**C: And also with you.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

### **Fourth Sunday of Easter**

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.

### **First Lesson:**

**Acts 2:42-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day 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, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

### **Second Lesson :**

**1 Peter 2:19-25**

For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure

when you do right and suffer for it, you have God's approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.' When 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. He 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. For you were going astray like sheep, but now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls.

### **Gospel Hymn**

Break Thou the Bread of Life,  
Dear Lord, to me, As once you broke the loaves  
Beside the sea; Beyond the sacred page  
I seek Thee, Lord; My spirit waits for you,  
O Living Word.

### **The Gospel:**

**John 10:1-10**

'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. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.' Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.'

Fourth Sunday of Easter - Sermon

**The Voice to Follow**

By Rev. Bill Schwertlich

Once upon a time, a pastor was teaching some little children about the 23rd Psalm. He told them that sheep weren't very smart and needed lots of guidance, help and protection. He said that a shepherd's job was to stay close to the sheep, ward off wild predators and help keep the sheep from wandering off and doing things that would get them hurt, sick or killed.

He pointed at the little children sitting there in the room and said that they were sheep and needed lots of guidance. Then the pastor put his hands out to the side, palms up in a dramatic gesture and, with raised eyebrows, asked the children, "If **you** are the sheep then **who** is the shepherd?"

The children stared in silence. Then Jennie, a second-grader, spoke up and said, "**Jesus!** Jesus is the shepherd." The pastor, obviously caught off guard, said to her, "Well, then, who am I?" Jennie thought for a moment, and then said with a shrug, "I guess you must be the *sheep dog*."

Little Jennie got it right. Jesus is the one and only real shepherd of people. In this case, it was the pastor who was confused. And whether leaders, followers, or indifferent bystanders, we all find ourselves, at least initially, like Jesus' original disciples, scratching our heads over what Jesus is talking about. The Lord as shepherd can conjure up sweet images of Jesus carrying a lamb in arms or around his neck. They evoke cozy, comfortable feelings. And we think we have "gotten the meaning" of it.

However, in times of real hurts and hardships, sentimental religious images can leave us disillusioned and confused. Jesus gives clues about God's presence and care. He first talks about sheep, bandits, thieves, hired hands, strangers, and shepherds. In doing so, he tells of God's commitment to tend and care for people in good places and bad, when resources are plenty or scarce, and in times when we feel supported or rejected.

So today, I, Pastor Bill, your faithful sheep-dog, invite you to ponder with me this "Who's-Who" guidebook for knowing God and relating to people.

First, a word about context. Jesus' words in John's gospel follow right after the story about Jesus giving sight to a man born blind. That story pointed out how Pharisees and other religious leaders were blinded to God's nature and authority in Jesus. The result was harmful behaviors and influences in the name of God. Pharisees acted like strangers, hired hands, thieves, and bandits in their role as spiritual guides. Jesus asserts himself as one worth following--authentic and genuinely good in heart and in deed.

Thieves and bandits have traits in common with hungry wolves. The interests they serve are exclusively their own. In his day, Jesus warned of people who use religion for their own purposes rather than worshiping God and serving others. Thieves exploit naive people to give their goods, not for God's purposes, but for their own wants and agendas. Others are like hired-hands, strangers who liked being rewarded—so long as there was no danger or risk involved. Yet others are like bandits and, like bullies, get their kicks by beating up on others, to prove how powerful they are and what they can get away with.

So, Jesus warned about religious leaders, and rightly so, and we've seen such in our time. Yet, at the same time, the behaviors he describes are not limited to people in leadership roles. Do we not all sometimes fail at loving and building up others in our lives and sometimes try to work out personal agendas? We act like hired hands, using others to get our way. If allowed to go unchecked, it's easy to fall into manipulating things for our benefit at the expense of others' well being.

Jesus reveals God as a Shepherd—good at keeping people who need God close to God. What makes a shepherd good is responsibility, commitment and love. God sent Jesus to make God’s heart of grace, and mission of love known for all people. We do well to learn his voice. We ignore it at our own peril. His voice signals his presence, and by it he leads, protects and nurtures us. His voice is his word of grace and it imprints in our hearts, so we recognize it.

For his role in the movie, “The Last King of Scotland”, actor Forrest Whittaker received an Academy Award for best actor. He masterfully depicted the psychosis of Idi Amin, the ruler of Uganda from 1970-1979. Amin, you may recall, committed atrocities as a monstrous dictator. The movie also showed conditions of the rural and tribal day-to-day lives of the people.

In the years since, little has changed in that society. The cow remains the center of the tribal value system. In times of scarcity, cattle rustling is a major problem—causing frequent clashes between rival tribes. During the dry season, whole communities move with their herds in search of pasture and water. In migratory times, rival tribes try to steal each other's cattle.

In 2004, Peter Kennedy wrote about the work of Lieutenant-Colonel John Baptist Mulindwa, an operations officer in The Peoples Defense Force of eastern Uganda. Col. Mulindwa told BBC news that in one incident, one tribe made off with more than 600 head. Every day the Ugandan army made efforts to reunite cattle with their owners. But proving rightful ownership was all but impossible with a sea of stolen cattle all mixed together.

Nathan Etungu of BBC’s “Network Africa” reported from a village north of M’bale on the problem of sorting them out. There he met one remarkable owner, an elderly woman, who had a simple solution. She stood before the mixed herd. She began calling her cows—by name. And, to the amusement of the soldiers, each cow, hearing her voice, lifted its head and followed her. As far as the army was concerned, it was as strong a proof of ownership as anyone could produce.

This relationship between cows and owner did not “just happen.” It was forged over time. It required the personal presence and attention of both cows and shepherdess. The same is true of us and God. The other cows did not respond, because her voice did not mean anything to them. They did not belong to her. They were not able to hear and follow the way her cattle did.

The thing about Jesus as a Good Shepherd is that he calls all. He does not discriminate. He calls out everyone’s name. He calls out your name. He gave his life on the Cross to demonstrate with his blood the extent of love by which we are loved. All backgrounds, all life experiences, all temperaments, are welcome. He leaves no one out. His message is grace, with wonderful messages of love by which we come to know him. His love, his call, and his presence close by is what gives us life now and eternally.

“Forgive,” the Bible says, “as you have been forgiven by God.” There. Now you heard his voice. It’s time to follow. Amen.

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

Shepherding God, we thank you for the educational ministries of your church. Enrich the work of teachers, professors, mentors, advisors, and faculty at colleges, seminaries, and all other places of learning.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creating God, we praise you for those who maintain and operate farm equipment, for those who plant and harvest crops, for local farmers' markets, and for those involved in agriculture of any kind. Be with them and strengthen their hands as they feed the world, especially in times of crisis.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Guiding God, no one should be in want. Call the nations to return to your paths of righteousness and inspire our leaders to walk in your ways, so that all may have the opportunity to live abundantly and sustainably. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Comforting God, you carry us tenderly. We pray for those who walk through dark valleys overshadowed by anxiety and overwhelmed with suffering. We pray especially for those on our prayer lists and for those whose names we now speak aloud or pray for silently in our hearts...

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, our refuge and strength, our present help in time of trouble, we pray for those who are caregivers. Grant your gracious care for those who tend the needs of the sick. Strengthen them in body and spirit. Refresh them when weary; console them when anxious; comfort them in grief; and hearten them in discouragement. Be with us all, and give us peace at all times and in every way.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Everlasting God, your beloved ones have heard your voice; you have called them by name and guided them to your side in death. We thank you for their lives of faithful witness.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord, who taught his disciples to pray :

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.**

### **Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you

The Lord make his face shine on you

And be gracious to you

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace **Amen**

### **Sending Hymn : Savior like a Shepherd Lead Us**

Savior, like a shepherd lead us, Much we need Thy tender care;

In Thy pleasant pastures feed us, For our use Thy folds prepare:

Bless-ed Jesus, bless-ed Jesus, You have bought us, we are yours.

You have promised to receive us, Poor and sinful though we be;

You hast mercy to relieve us, Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free:

Bless-ed Jesus, bless-ed Jesus, Early let us turn to you.

## The Good News Weekly May 3 - 8, 2020

PLEASE NOTE: Your prayer requests are very important. Your prayer request concerns are important. Please communicate these directly to Pastor Bill, to Chairman Ken Wienken, or to any Church Council member.

### In Our Prayers Today and This Week

Prayer of thanks for **Winston Tipp**, who is home from the hospital.

We would also like to remind you of our new quarterly "**Renew and Refresh**" policy for **all prayer lists**.

The prayer list in the announcements and the newsletter will start with a clean slate every quarter. This way we will always have a fresh updated prayer list.

If someone gets deleted that you would like back on the list, just email Sally, tell a Council on Duty, Pastor Bill or the attendance card has a place to add someone to list,



- 1 Elaine Thielemann
- 2 LaNell Waldrop
- 3 Blake Biehunko
- 5 Jack Brandes  
Sharla Bell
- 6 Carrie Froebel
- 7 Charlie Criswell
- 8 Johnny Class



5-7 James and Carol Wenzel

### Confirmation Class of 2019/2020

Brooke Biehunko Avery Dittert Carter Findeisen

Ethan Meiers

Skylar Ordner Rylan Reichardt

Please keep these confirmands in your prayers on their journey.

### Residents of:

#### Colonial Belle, Sealy:

Wilfred Eckardt

#### Arbors of Briarwood- Bellville

Carrie Froebel

#### Shut-ins:

Marjorie Criswell

Sharla Bell

Katherine Ludwig

Sydell Swearingen

### St. John Virtual Venue: Real Worship!

Pastor Bill invites everyone to join in worship as we hear the Gospel of our Lord. You can find a video recording offering the weekly word of the Lord in Word, Prayer and Song. Just go to the Face Book Page for **St. John Lutheran Church of Cat Spring, TX**. There is also a link on our Web Page ([www.stjohncatspring.org](http://www.stjohncatspring.org)) to take you to our FB Page

Have a wonderful weekend and stay safe.

*Christ is Risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

Pauline wanted to let everyone know that the **Annual Cat Spring Ag Fest** has been cancelled for this year, due to Covid 19.

### Your Church Council

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