**First Presbyterian Church, Tucumcari**

*The Church With the Holy Spirit Window*

**April 25, 2021 4th Sunday in Easter**

**Rev. Amy Pospichal, Pastor Marjorie G. McKenzie, Accompanist**

RH 41 When Morning Gilds the Skies

RH 106 The King of Love, My Shepherd Is

RH 473 Blest Be the Tie that Binds

**Call to Worship**

As we gather together, we remember that we are not alone in our faith:

**God is our Companion.**

Though the Way is not easy, and we may suffer in righteousness,

**God is our Comfort.**

When anger fills our hearts, and grief crushes our spirits,

**God is our Counselor.**

And through it all, we are together:

**For we are all children of God, our Companion, our Comfort, and our Counselor.**

**Opening Prayer**

Open our hearts to your power and presence today, O Jesus. Even though we have done much to put distance between ourselves and you, come to us today, Risen Christ. So that, in our worship and our lives lived, we declare as Resurrection People, that in you there is repentance and forgiveness from sins, from here to the ends of the earth. Amen.

**Call to Confession**

Let us confess together our mistakes and all the wrong turns we have made, in faith and in penitence. Join me, as we pray saying,

**Prayer of Confession**

**You long to fill us with your comfort and peace,
Still Waters of Grace, but we continue to take on
more anxiety, more worry, more fear.  You would
comfort us in the gentleness of your hope, but we
welcome the embrace of a world spinning more and
more out of control.  You would feed us with more
than we need, but we continue to hunger for the
sweet sensations offered to us by temptation.
You keep your promises and offer us forgiveness
and mercy all the days of our life.  May we keep our
eyes focused on the path down which you lead; may
we listen to the call of the Good Shepherd who leads
us into your joy, that kingdom prepared for us by
Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.** ~silence~ **Amen.**

**Assurance of Pardon**

Not everything has been revealed to us, but this we do know: as God’s children, we are blessed, we are loved, we are forgiven.
**Our lives have been transformed by the abundant mercy given to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thanks be to God! Amen**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

**\*Gloria Patri**

 **Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen, Amen.**

**Psalm 23:1-6 (Unison, in the language you prefer.)**

**The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name’s sake.**

**Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff —
they comfort me.**

**You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.**

**Prayers of the People**

O Lord, you are our shepherd;

we shall not be in want.

Your creative grace is visible in lush green pastures

and revealed in still, clear waters.

Your restoring resurrecting Spirit revives our souls and our communities,

and you guide us in ways of righteousness for the sake of your earth.

We pray for the earth you create and love:

for people, families, nations, and species that dwell in the valley of the shadow of death;

for all who fear the evils of pollution, violence, depredation, and illness;

for those whose suffering is on our hearts this morning, and for those whom we will never meet.

Shepherding God, be with your people;

with your rod and your staff, restore us and lead us.

Spread your table of abundance before those who hunger and thirst;

set us free from enmity and division.

Anoint us with your calling to reconciliation,

and let the cup of our life overflow

with justice and life for all your creation.

Let your goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life,

and make this earth your home forever,

in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Offering**

**Time out for Teaching: The Shepherd-King**

In Ancient Egyptian and Near-Eastern thought, a typical image of a good king was as a good shepherd, watching and leading a flock of sheep. Sheep are not the brightest of herd animals, particularly those who are domesticated. [I may have been outwitted by a goat before, however. I even have a goat named after me down in Socorro, as I used to preach at the church there.]

But to know that these not-so-bright creatures - useful and beautiful and fascinating as they are – are in the care of someone who is good in every way, is really and truly comforting. They would otherwise be easily frightened, get lost, get eaten. So long as they trust their Good Shepherd and stay close to the flock.

A good king of the time of David (about 1000 BC) was seen to be one who you could trust, who would protect you. So, if this is your king, a Good Shepherd, who would never lead you down the wrong path, and always to a path of abundant life, this is a king who you would always want to follow, to whose voice your ears hearken.

So, the fourth Sunday of Easter is often called “Good Shepherd Sunday.” It is smack dab in the center of the Easter Season, which is 7 Sundays long. We stop at this midpoint of the Resurrection Season to graze on the stories of the Good Shepherd. To refresh ourselves with the goodness and mercy of Psalm 23. These familiar and earthy, comforting ideas come right up against the fear and joy of the disciples, when they meet Jesus, back from the dead.

Hmmm? It may be a clash of ideas. Or is it?

He did say…

It might drive the point home even more, what teachings he taught us in his Sermon on the Mount, or the healings He performed, to declare the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

**Prayer for Illumination**

Risen Christ,
and made their hearts burn within them.
Open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts,
so we might recognize you once again
in these words of scripture,
by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**1 John 3:16-24**

16We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us — and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. 17How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?

18Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. 19And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him 20whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; 22and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him.

23And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. 24All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

**Gospel John 10:11-18**

11“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away — and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. 13The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. 14I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. 16I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

**Sermon “The Lord is My Sherpa” Rev. Amy Pospichal**

I have always thought that stories of Mt. Everest were fascinating. They pit humans against the most dangerous and extreme situations ever seen in nature. People train for years for what could be their once in a lifetime shot at reaching the summit.

The most dangerous part of it is called the Khumbu Icefall, a section of the Khumbu Glacier. It is a section winding around the mountain where ice falls down upon the path… the glacier moves down the mountain at a speed of between 3 and 4 feet a day, the fastest time being after the sun comes up. Only the most experienced climbers can get through it in a few hours. Less experienced ones could take up to 12 hours to pass through this dangerous area. Because it moves so fast, towers of ice as large as cars occasionally tumble through, and crevasses open up from time to time, unexpectedly. One climber was killed by a 12-story tower of ice that fell along that stretch of the glacier.

This is why everyone hires a Sherpa, or a team of Sherpas to help them make the climb. The word “Sherpa” has become more commonplace…even as a verb in normal English verbal communication: “Will you Sherpa us?” “I can be your Sherpa.” We say it probably because it sounds cool, playful even. It sounds rather innocent. That was my intent behind the sermon title. And then I started to learn more about the Sherpa people…

Sherpas are a specific ethnic group in that region of Nepal. They have become the hired hands of the mountaineering world. They are endowed with very special skills and genetics which help them endure the extreme altitude, cold and navigating the extremely rough terrain. They are the ones who construct the ropes and ladders to help climbers feel their way forward up and down Everest. They spend more time up there than the climbers do, in order to set up and provide the safest possible journey for them, even though it doesn’t ensure 100% safety. Where the ground may suddenly open up under your feet, or the rope breaks through the ice at just the wrong moment, there is no 100% security against death.

In a 2014 edition of National Geographic, in an article called “Sherpas: The Invisible Men of Everest,” you find out what a perilous job it is. But in their deeply impoverished villages, it is the best job you can get to feed your family and have some kind of financial security. Now, the adventure seekers of the world have increased their demand for Sherpas to help them attain that summit. Sherpas are a very poor people and the adventure industry has been under some criticism recent years for the extreme risk that the Sherpa people undertake, for just a few thousand dollars. Often, the insurance that is required to hire them is not quite enough to help their families should the breadwinner die while guiding adventurers to their destination. And they get paid less, overall, than do the western guides who come to Everest. In a sense, the Sherpa is more than a hired hand. He and she – there are female Sherpas too – is committed to much more than a paycheck. They have very poor families to feed and they believe the land is sacred.

Most of us don’t walk around every day afraid that the ground will open up and swallow us up, nor in fear that boulders the size of trucks might fall on us. But we all go through life with the usual anxieties and fears. And they are big enough for most of us to handle. A friend of mine used to say that most of the things we worry about never happen in the first place. But through all these things that do scare us, we can remember that the Lord is our Sherpa. He makes a way for us through this wilderness of life filled with peril. He has, unlike the Sherpa people, no need for anything. He just wants us to listen to His voice and follow Him. And for us to be at peace under His care and guidance.

The Lord is the Good Sherpa. His followers know His voice and they follow Him. Learning the sound of His voice is not as hard as you might think. All it takes is opening a Bible. All it takes is to remember that we all belong to Him, even if we don’t think that we do. All it takes is to find a member of His flock and listen. And be still, when you have found yourself in a place that scares you most, for at least God is there to lead you through. I recently received a card from La Mesa Presbyterian Church in Albuquerque. It was a sympathy card. The best thing about it was there was another, smaller card inside of it. About the size of a business card, you could slip it in your wallet or tape it to your dashboard. I have it in my car right now. It just has a blue butterfly sticker on it and the words: “Be still. Know that I am God.” There is a certain centered stillness that we may enjoy because God is making a way ahead for us, across the crevasses of this life, helping us dodge danger to our souls. Our Sherpa, Our Shepherd truly wants us to know the peace He offers, whether we are wrestling with our own perilous journey or we are working out peace and justice on someone else’s behalf.

In Jesus’ own words, describing the Good Shepherd, he says, “my sheep know my voice and they follow me…” Our Presbyterian Book of Confessions drive it all home for us: “In life and in death, we belong to God.” The Good News is – We belong to God. Let Him be your leader, listen carefully to his call and though the way be perilous, he will never lead you astray. Thanks be to God! Amen.

**A Sherpa Version of Psalm 23 (Rev. Amy Pospichal)**

**The Lord is my Sherpa, I have no needs.**

**He provides me a warm tent and a hot meal**

**despite the howling winds, a warm cup of tea**

**He makes me whole.**

**He brings me across the crevasses to safety**

**For his glory.**

**Even though I am showered with danger,
I am confident
for you are with me;
my guardrails and ropes -
They support me.**

**You are on my team, you have my back
no matter who are my attackers;
you welcome me as a guest;
My cup overflows.
Surely your welcome and grace shall always be in my mind
all the rest of my life,
and I shall know what it means to belong to the Lord
forever.**

**\*Benediction**

**Prayer Requests:**

Please add:

Juan and Rosa – for better health

Stuart Fowler and family at loss of his mother

Remove:

David Short in ICU – he has died

**Announcements:**

The Green Chile Gals are invited to get together on Wednesday, April 28th, for a little “BYOL” (Bring Your Own Lunch) and fellowship. Let’s talk about some of the activities we are able to do right now and when the next PW meeting should be. I know we miss seeing each other!

**Today at 2:00PM Rev. Amy is hosting a “Casual Crafters”** group at the church until 4:00PM. Come and share your current art or craft project (Knitting? Painting?) or come and visit over a cup of coffee. If you have a current event or topic of interest you would like to present during that time, please let me know.