**The Message for April 22, 2018**

***Finding Peace, Part 2***

**John 10:11-18**

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We are in week 2 of our 3-week worship series on Peace. Our theme for this series is (**picture**) *The struggle finding peace in a messed up world.*

We can get distracted by so many things in this messed-up world. We can find ourselves focusing on things that do not bring us peace – work, politics, family, traffic, church, school, health, wealth, and the list goes on…

That’s why it is so important for us to be reminded that our peace comes from an on-going relationship with Jesus as Lord and Savior. He is our shepherd – our good shepherd. It’s an image we get from Psalm 23. And what a peaceful image it is…

Listen to these words and let your mind wander as you reflect on your relationship with Jesus…

### Psalm 23 (NIV)

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.  
 He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,* *he refreshes my soul.  
He guides me along the right paths  
    for his name’s sake.  
Even though I walk  
    through the darkest valley,  
I will 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 is running over.  
Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
    all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
    forever.*

As these words suggest Jesus is our good shepherd and with him we have all that we need. With Jesus we have a peace that surpasses all human understanding.

That’s the theme in our Gospel reading for this morning too. It comes from John 10:11-18.

**Read John 10:11-18**

Story: Years ago a butcher had sold all of his poultry except one last chicken.

A woman came into the shop and asked for a chicken. The butcher weighed it and said it would be $2.45. “Do you have a larger one?” the woman asked. The butcher thought fast. He put the chicken back into the ice bin, stirred around for a bit, and then brought out the same chicken. Weighting it, he said it would be $2.95.

“Great!” The woman said, “I’ll take both of them!”

Imagine the look on that butchers face when the woman asked him for both chickens since he had only one. He wasn’t being honest with her. He lied. “Busted,” as we used to say growing up.

The word that comes to mind is *integrity* – or lack thereof…

**“Integrity” means *the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.***

Jesus is not talking about butchers this morning, but he is talking about *integrity*.

He tells a story about a good shepherd, a shepherd who was honest and trust-worthy, caring and compassionate, willing to die for his sheep. Jesus is talking about himself – of course. He is our good shepherd.

The people in Jesus’ day would have known about shepherds. They knew what kind of life a shepherd lived. It was a difficult life, a hard life, a non-glorious life.

A shepherd would start learning about sheep at an early age. He would spent his young life learning how to care for the sheep, then the rest of his adult life tending to the sheep, fighting off the animals who would eat the sheep, and sometimes fighting off robbers who would steal the sheep.

It was a lonely life, a difficult life, but if a shepherd did his job well everyone would know that he was a good shepherd. Jesus used an example that people could understand, a story about shepherds to tell us something about himself. Jesus is the good shepherd of our lives.

**The word “good” can be defined as**

1. ***morally right or righteousness***
2. ***benefit or advantage to someone or something***

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Get this… Because Jesus is good we receive the benefit of his goodness. It is our advantage/our benefit that Jesus is good. Why is that so important because as Isaiah puts it…

***We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way* (Isaiah 53:6).**

That’s how sheep are… That’s how we are… Consider these three benefits we receive from Jesus, our good shepherd.

First benefit…

1. **Jesus says that the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep**.

If a shepherd did his job well and not just for the money, he would protect the sheep at all cost. Jesus said he willingly laid down his life for us, his sheep. He wasn’t in it for the money or for the glory. He does not run off when trouble comes. He made the ultimate sacrifice for us.

Story: Bill was visiting a sheep ranch and saw a very strange lamb. It looked like it had 2 heads and 8 feet. He asked the rancher about it. The rancher said that one sheep had a baby but the mother died. They tried to give the orphan sheep to another mother-sheep but when she smelled it, she rejected it.

The rancher skinned the dead sheep and put the skin on the live lamb. Now the mother-sheep accepted the lamb as her own and cared for it.

Likewise Jesus died for us as the Lamb of God. God accepts us because we are clothed with the Lamb’s robe of righteousness. We benefit from Jesus’ righteousness.

Jesus died for us freely so that we might live for him freely. Jesus loves us enough, cares about us enough to die for us so that we might have life in his fold now and forever.

Second benefit…

1. **Jesus says that the good shepherd knows his sheep by name.**

Story: Sally grew up in the church but stopped going after she was confirmed. Now in her 40’s she was talking with her friend, Kim, who was very active in a church. Sally asked Kim,

“How does Jesus know me personally? More importantly, How can I believe that God is really interested in what happens to me?”

Kim replied, “Look at your fingers. There are billions of finger tips in the world, but none are like yours. Even your fingertips have had special attention from God.” Kim went on to say, “You are one of a kind and God cares about you and cares what happens to you.”

Indeed - God care about us and cares what happens to us. That’s why God sent us Jesus to be our good shepherd to provide for us. He continues to provide for us.

This morning when you come to the table to eat and to drink the bread and wine, you are invited to meet Jesus in a personal way. This is his body and blood given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins.

Worship is designed to strengthen our relationship with Jesus our good shepherd -- to reassure us, to convince us, that he loves us, that he cares for us, that he is interested in us and what happens to us. Like sheep to a shepherd.

Third benefit…

1. **Jesus gathers his sheep together and there are more to come.**

We are here in worship because Jesus has called us here. We have been called to participate in something beyond ourselves – bigger than ourselves.

The time and money we invest in this faith community is time and money well invested. Jesus invested in us and by being here at least once a week we invest in Jesus and in one another.

It is here that we experience God’s love made available through Jesus. Here we focus on Jesus and our relationship with him. Here we are refreshed and renewed, as we hear again about our good and gracious God who loves us.

God loves you!

Turn to someone and remind them of that by saying to them, *“God loves you!”*

Jesus says there are other sheep that must be brought into this fold into this church, which means the church is always changing, always growing, always adding and loosing members. We are always looking for ways to share God’s love with more and more people.

That means the fold is not constant. In this fold things happen, changes are made, people grow in faith, hope, and love, people meet new people and journey together in the faith because we are loved by God.

This fold – this church is a place where we experience God’s love and grace and mercy and forgiveness and then we share those God-gifts with others.

In this place we meet Jesus – our good shepherd. We are his sheep and we listen to his voice.

Jesus is calling you by name… Are you listening? More importantly are you following? Jesus is our good shepherd. Amen.

May the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep your hearts and your minds open to the ways of Christ Jesus, our good shepherd. Amen.