

## CALL TO WORSHIP

With God as our guide

**we have abundant life.**

With God as our protector

**we need not fear even the darkest valley.**

With Jesus as our Good Shepherd

**we will follow his voice**

**going in and out in peace.**

Hymn Saviour Like a Shepherd Lead Us

## OPENING PRAYER

Lord God

You are our Saviour and king

our Master and friend

our Shepherd and guide.

Wherever we go, You are with us.

Wherever we stray, You seek us out.

Whenever we call, You hear us.

You are our promise and our hope

our place of rest and peace

our security and our sureness.

Whoever we are, You accept us.

Whatever we do, You love us.

Whenever we fall, You lift us up.

Lord God we come to this place

from different places,

different lives,

different situations,

with different concerns

and different dreams.

Yet we come as one,

a people of shared faith

in a God who shared all.

And so we praise You, Lord God,  
that You have risen from the dead  
to fulfil Your promise to all creation;  
we praise You that you have  
gifted us Your spirit  
as a companion and guide.

We praise You that you have chosen us as Your people  
to build Your kingdom here on earth.

Gracious God  
our path in life does not always  
lead us into quiet, calm places  
of caring and compassion for others.  
Our journey often takes us  
off the beaten track  
and into the difficult terrain  
of selfishness and anger.  
Our progress is often slowed  
by fear and anxiety.

Yet You remain at our side, Lord,  
to comfort and provide,  
reminding us of Your promise  
that all is forgiven for all time.  
And so we praise You, Lord,  
that you bless us anew each day  
with Your grace and goodness.  
That You open doors  
to fresh opportunities  
and that You lead us by the hand  
to a place we can call home.

Take us from here,  
refreshed in our journey  
with You and with one another,  
that we might love You more  
and follow You more closely.  
In Jesus' name. AMEN

#### ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Hear, O Christian, and believe:  
God has promised salvation to us and to our children;  
and to all who are near and far.  
In the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.  
Thanks be to God.

#### THE TIME WITH THE YOUNG & YOUNG AT HEART MUSICAL INTERLUDE

#### SCRIPTURE

Acts 2:42–47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:19–25

John 10:1–10

#### SERMON HIS MASTER'S VOICE

It is a logo that is known to any music fan;

A logo that has remained unchanged for well over 100 years:

The image of a dog listening to a gramophone

Popularly known as His Master's Voice.

Since 1931 it was the logo for RCA-Victor

(although it had a life for some 40 years before that)

And more recently

became the source for the name of a chain of music stores

Around the world – HMV.

The puzzled, inquisitive reaction of Nipper,  
The Jack Russell terrier,  
Upon hearing the voice of his owner coming from this machine  
pictured in this enduring image,  
Is reminiscent of Jesus teaching in our Gospel lesson for  
today.

In our reading for this morning,  
Jesus shares with his disciples these qualities of leadership  
That set Jesus apart  
And give us a glimpse of the Kingdom Jesus will usher in.

There are a couple of pieces of background  
That are not easily apparent in the story,  
That help in our understanding of this teaching of Jesus.

The first has to do with the understanding of image of the Shepherd  
For the Jewish people of Jesus time.

In Ezekiel chapter 34

The prophet Ezekiel uses this image of the good and wicked shepherds  
To describe the leaders of the people of God.

The wicked shepherds were those shepherds who did not follow God's will,  
Who used their positions of leadership for self-enrichment  
And did not care for the children of God.

From there,

This image became associated with the longing of the people  
For the Messiah,  
The anointed One of God.

The other piece of background that we need to be aware of  
Is the story to which this teaching of Jesus is attached.

In John chapter 9

We find the story of the man who is born blind.

As Jesus and the disciples encounter this man,

The disciples ask Jesus,

“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

In the culture of Jesus' day

Physical disabilities were seen as punishments from God.

Jesus heals the man born blind on the Sabbath,

And sets off a controversy about Sabbath observance

- but also a controversy about the Kingdom of God.

When this blind man is brought before the religious authorities

So that he can identify the one who healed him on the Sabbath,

He is unable – or unwilling – to say.

Next the parents of the man born blind are brought forward

and asked to identify the one who healed their son.

But they cannot – or will not.

It is important for us to remember

That it is in this context that Jesus speaks of being the good shepherd

Who tends and cares for his sheep,

Whose voice the sheep hear and follow.

As we come to this text today,

One of the questions that we bring to this text is

How do we know when we are listening to God's voice?

First, implicit in the story of the Good Shepherd

Is the understanding of a deep and abiding relationship

Between the shepherd and sheep.

The sheep come to trust the shepherd and follow his voice

Because the shepherd has been proven to be trustworthy.

How do we build such an enduring relationship with Jesus?

It begins in the book.

Often it is said that as Christians we are people of the Word.

Some use this as an argument for Biblical literalism

But I would suggest that it means we are people who are steeped in the Word.

That we have engaged in the Spiritual Discipline of reading God's Word each day,

In studying it -- alone and with others,

Until we come to know God

And the love he has shown us

In sending Jesus into the world.

That is what is at the heart of our Presbyterian and Reformed faith.

We are a church that is gathered, equipped and sent out by God's Words.

As we read God's word,

We come to see how Jesus is known in words like

Life, Light, Forgiveness, Healing, Hope.

Anytime there is a discussion of faith

That leads away from these core principles

We must be on our guard

To ascertain if God is truly in it.

Second we hear God

As we gather with other Christians together in worship and praise.

In describing the Kingdom of God to his disciples

Jesus says "*I am the gate.*

*Whoever enters by me will be saved,*

*and will come in and go out and find pasture.*"

Like sheep following a Shepherd

As Christians we are gathered together each week in worship,

Where we find rest and refreshment of the Spirit,

As we gather together with the people of God;

Called to assembly by Jesus himself.

This is a difficult marker of the community of faith

In these days of social-isolation.

At this point,

For the good of the community

We cannot be physically present here

--Many have shared with me how you miss being together

With your fellow believers in this place.

But we know this is temporary;

And for the life of all,

It is good that we not gather right now.

But we also know that we will gather together again.

The amazing thing about the Christian faith

IS THAT IT IS BUILT ON A FUTURE HOPE;

And as a result we know that we will not be disappointed.

Our faith always points us toward God's love and God's grace.

So no matter where we may be,

We know that our Good Shepherd is leading us forward;

And in that there is great joy.

Until then,

we gather in a slightly different manner,

as we do this morning.

And we still manage those opportunities to reach out,

to say hello to each other;

to stay in touch;

and that is a good thing.

And finally – at least for this morning --

God's Kingdom is surprisingly inclusive;

And we may not always like the people that God chooses to let in.

The man born blind was considered an utter outcast

Because for some unknown reason he was unfit, unclean;

And yet in Scripture's great record

He is known as being a vehicle through which

God could reveal God's glory.

Our churches are filled with broken people.  
Some with hidden faults and hidden shame;  
Others who have committed offenses that are known to all.  
And yet each one has a place.  
As that great hymn states,  
“The vilest offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives!”

Each of us is all too aware of our shortcomings and foibles;  
All those things that get in the way of our relationships with others  
-that get in the way of our relationship with God.  
And yet each of us knows that in this place  
None of that matters.  
God does not see us as we are  
But rather God sees us as we have been created to be.  
And in that is our hope.

Over the years in ministry I have been deeply saddened  
When events have happened in the lives of congregational members  
That have caused them to withdraw from the fellowship of the  
church.  
For when our lives are turned upside down  
We all need a place where we can go  
And know that we will be accepted and loved;  
A place where we will receive grace & pardon & forgiveness;  
And the assurance that a new life is possible for us all.  
If your church is not that place,  
Then where is?  
If your church is not that place,  
Then is it really Christ's church?

In these and so many ways,  
Jesus continues to call out his sheep;  
Jesus continues to call out us.  
What a wonderful hope that is.



My encouragement to all this day is simply this:

Listen!

Listen for the ways Jesus is calling you;

To receive mercy;

To be engaged in that great act of showing forth God's mercy.

There is a place for you.

Listen for the Master's voice.

## MINUTE FOR MISSION

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Lord, You are our shepherd.

We thank You that You give us everything we need.

That You offer us rest and refreshment through Your Word.

That You keep us on the straight and narrow when we are prone to stray.

We thank You that in those times when we are afraid

we can trust that You watch out for us.

Provider God

You have given us so much of Yourself  
in Your abundant love and grace.

And so we lay before You  
our offerings of money and of ourselves.

With Your blessing  
may they open the gate  
to visions of a better world for all.

For there are many who hunger;  
many who are left out in the cold  
while others reap the benefits of a society based on greed.  
We think of those who are homeless or displaced,  
Those who are exploited,  
those who are poor.

There are many who cannot enjoy the beauty and mystery of creation.  
We think of prisoners of conscience,  
of those living in war-ravaged lands,  
of those confined through illness.

There are many who yearn for rest  
in lives which are restless and hard.  
We think of those who work long hours for little reward;  
those who are discontent and disillusioned.

There are many who struggle to find the right path  
because life has taken them a different, difficult route.  
We think of those with addiction problems,  
those who turn to crime through desperation,  
of children whose home life is chaotic.

There are many who are fearful for themselves and for others.  
We think of those in broken relationships,  
those who live with sickness,  
those who are afraid of the future and of being themselves.

There are many who have lost hope  
that light will ever penetrate their darkness –  
we think of those who live  
with loneliness, grief,  
bereavement and rejection.  
We are mindful of all those  
With whom we walk alongside  
in their pain and suffering, their joy and hope;  
And we hold them before you now.

Lord God,  
shepherd all Your people  
on their different journeys  
with their different joys and struggles.  
Remind them  
that all are honoured guests at Your table  
and that all may find a home in You.  
Lavish them with Your goodness and love  
so that they might know that in You  
they have everything they need.

Keep us constant in prayer  
As we pray in the manner which Jesus taught his disciples:  
OUR FATHER>>>

Hymn The Lord's my Shepherd

Benediction  
Let us go in the joy of resurrection:  
purify your souls;  
be obedient to the truth;  
be genuine in love;  
Listen for your Master's voice.

And may the grace of Jesus Christ our risen Lord,  
the love of God who raised him from the dead,  
and the power of the Holy Spirit who fills the world with new life  
Rest upon you  
and remain with you always. AMEN

Three-fold Amen