

Welcome to Worship at  
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI  
Easter 4 - April 25, 2021

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

**Hymn #360 - *"The Lord's My Shepherd; I'll Not Want"***

**The Lord's my shepherd; I'll not want.  
He makes me down to lie  
In pastures green; he leadeth me  
The quiet waters by.**

**My soul he doth restore again  
And me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
E'en for his own name's sake.**

**Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,  
Yet will I fear no ill;  
For thou art with me, and thy rod  
And staff me comfort still.**

**My table thou hast furnished  
In presence of my foes;  
My head thou dost with oil anoint,  
And my cup overflows.**

**Goodness and mercy, all my life,  
Shall surely follow me,  
And in God's house forevermore  
My dwelling-place shall be.**

**Confession of Sins:**

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

**C: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!**

**P:** Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen.**

### **First Lesson: Acts 4:23-33**

After Peter and John were released, they went to their own friends and reported everything the high priests and the elders had said. When they heard this, with one mind they raised their voices to God and said, “Master, you are the God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. By the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David, your servant, you said: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers are gathered together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. “For certainly, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did whatever your hand and your plan had decided beforehand should happen. “Now Lord, look at their threats and give to your servants the ability to keep on speaking your word with all boldness as you stretch out your hand to heal and as signs and wonders take place through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After they prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken. Also, everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to speak the word of God with boldness. The whole group of believers was one in heart and soul. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they held everything in common. The apostles continued to testify about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ with great power, and abundant grace was on all of them. (EHV)

### **Psalm 23**

**Refrain: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

**The LORD is my ‘shepherd,  
I shall not ‘be in want.**

**He makes me lie down in green ‘pastures;  
He leads me beside quiet ‘waters.**

**He re’stores my soul;  
He guides me in paths of righteousness for his ‘name’s sake.**

**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will  
fear no ‘evil,  
For you are with me; your rod and your staff, they ‘comfort me.**

**Refrain: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my ‘enemies,  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup ‘overflows.**

**Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days ‘of my life,  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD for’ever.**

**Glory be to the Father and ‘to the Son  
And to the Holy ‘Spirit,  
As it was in the be’ginning,  
Is now, and will be forever. ‘Amen.**

**Refrain: The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.**

**Second Lesson: 1 John 3:1-2**

See the kind of love the Father has given us that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are! The world does not know us, because it did not know him. Dear friends, we are children of God now, but what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when he is revealed we will be like him, and we will see him as he really is. (EHV)

**Verse of the Day:** Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! I am the Good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me. Alleluia.

**Gospel: John 10:11-18**

“I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the

sheep. The hired man, who is not a shepherd, does not own the sheep. He sees the wolf coming, leaves the sheep, and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. Because he works for money, he does not care about the sheep. I am the Good Shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me (just as the Father knows me and I know the Father). And I lay down my life for the sheep. I also have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock and one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This is the commission I received from my Father.” (EHV)

### **The Apostles’ Creed:**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

### **Hymn #375 - “*The King of Love My Shepherd Is*”**

**The King of love my shepherd is,  
Whose goodness fails me never;  
I nothing lack if I am his,  
And he is mine forever.**

**Where streams of living water flow,  
My Savior gently leads me,  
And where the verdant pastures grow,  
With food celestial feeds me.**

Confused and foolish oft I strayed,  
But yet in love he sought me  
And on his shoulder gently laid  
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill  
With you, dear Lord, beside me;  
Your rod and staff my comfort still,  
Your cross before to guide me.

You spread a table in my sight,  
A banquet here bestowing;  
Your oil of welcome, my delight;  
My cup is overflowing!

And so through all the length of days  
Your goodness fails me never.  
Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise  
Within your house forever!

The Sermon: Acts 4:23-33  
“Three Elements Of Christian Prayer”

“*Why do the nations **rage** and the peoples **plot in vain**?*” That’s a good **question**, isn’t it? It was a question which King **David** had asked some 1,000 years **prior** to our text, when the Ammonites had formed a senseless coalition with the Arameans **against** Israel. It was a question which was asked by the friends of **Peter** and **John** in our **text**, when the priests, the temple guard, and the Sadducees collaborated **against** the early Christian Church. It’s a question which would **later** become a part of George Frederick Handel’s musical masterpiece, The Messiah, and it’s a question which could easily be raised again and again. **Why** do nations or individuals get all **worked up**; and **scheme**, and **plot**, and **plan**; in regard to things over which they have **no control**? What do they hope to **accomplish**? The Bible tells us, “*Our **God** is in heaven. He does whatever pleases **him**.*” If the plans of others don’t match up with **God’s** plans, all they can hope to receive in the end is a huge helping of **frustration**.

Instead of trying to **dictate** and **control** every situation ourselves, it’s far **better** to put our trust and confidence in **God**, who controls **all** things. It’s just a matter of turning to Him in humble Christian **prayer**. This morning we will be

looking at **Three Elements Of Christian Prayer** - the **when**, the **what**, and the **why**.

What do I mean by the **when** of Christian prayer? It might be helpful if we would investigate the circumstances which surrounded the prayer in our **text**. Peter and John had just spent the night in **prison**. They were being **hassled** more and more every day, because the chief priests and elders didn't want them talking about **Jesus**, and especially about His **resurrection** from the dead. However, personal **prejudice** makes for some pretty **shaky** charges, and for that reason, these leaders were not able to **hold** the disciples in jail for very **long**. Nevertheless, **arrests** of this kind, along with a multitude of **other** threats, were becoming more frequent and more troublesome. The disciples' work was continually being interrupted. The disciples began to wonder if they should **continue** preaching in Jerusalem, or **move on** to somewhere else, or perhaps even **give up** what they were doing all together. But instead of **worrying** about it, or trying to make the decision **on their own**, the disciples felt it was time to find out exactly what **God** had in mind for them. So, when they had been released, the disciples gathered together with their own people, and they **prayed**.

In doing this they were following the command and invitation of the Lord: "**Call on me in the day of distress. I will deliver you, and you will honor me.**" Not only were the disciples praying **in** distressing **times**, but they were also praying **to** the Lord **Jesus**. Here they address Him as "**Master ... the God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.**" Jesus is the **Creator** - the **powerful** God who made **men** - not one of the helpless **false** gods which **men** had made for **themselves**. I think it's significant that the disciples had not forgotten about God's work of **creation**, not even at a time when their hearts were filled to overflowing with joy because of His work of **redemption** - a work which He had so recently brought to **completion** through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The disciples were concerned about **all** of God's works.

Notice also that "**with one mind they raised their voices to God.**" I rather doubt that this was a prayer **out loud** and **in unison**, although considering the words which were used here it certainly **could** have been. I think it's much more likely that Peter or John **led** this group of Christians in prayer, and that all the other believers **silently** spoke the words too. That's quite often the way **we** pray in our worship services. The pastor **verbally speaks** the words of the prayers, but we are all **silently** offering the **same** prayer. Our **thoughts** are just as meaningful as **words** to God.

As **another** example of silent prayer, you might remember **Moses** as he was leading the Israelites out of Egypt. He had run into some very serious trouble. In front of him was the Red Sea, and behind him was the Pharaoh and his army. It was a very tense time - a seemingly no-win situation. The Bible tells us that at that moment God said to Moses, *“Why are you **crying out** to me? Tell the Israelites to set out.”* Now, Moses hadn't **said** anything, but it's very obvious that he had been **praying** - **silently** calling out to God for a **solution** to their problem. And as you know, God **heard** and **answered** the prayer of Moses, allowing the Israelites to pass through the Red Sea on dry ground while **drowning** the pursuing Egyptian army. But, let's get back now to the believers in our **text**, who had gathered together in **Jerusalem**.

Although we have no **proof** for it, we can well imagine that these people had called a meeting in order to see what they could **do** on behalf of Peter and John, who had just been **arrested**. Imagine their **surprise** when Peter and John **showed up** for the meeting **themselves!** The gathering became an occasion for **prayer** - not only because of their great **joy** and **thankfulness**, but also because they needed new **direction** from the Lord. The disciples now realized that all the preaching they would do in the **future** would be in direct **opposition** to the will of the local **authorities** - including the **religious** authorities. So, they turned in prayer to an even **greater** authority - and this is **what** they said, *“Lord, consider their threats, and enable Your servants to speak Your Word with great **boldness**. Stretch out Your right hand to heal, and perform miraculous signs and wonders, through the name of Your holy servant, Jesus.”*

I find that to be a **remarkable** prayer. They did **not** say what **we** would probably have said. They didn't ask for God's enemies to be **punished**. They didn't ask God to **drive away** those wicked people. They didn't even ask God to remove the threats of possible **imprisonment** and **death** for themselves. But rather, they prayed, “Lord, recognize the evil things which are now confronting us, and **strengthen** our spirits. Give us the **courage** to cheerfully **continue** our work for Your kingdom, no matter what kind of **opposition** we may encounter.”

These believers recognized that the persecutions which confronted them were actually **beneficial**. Paul later told the Philippians, *“Through my **chains**, the majority of the brothers in the Lord have become much more **confident** about **daring** to speak the word of God **fearlessly**.”* It seems that when people are given a “cause” to rally around, they will join together and **do** whatever needs to be done. As the old cliché says, *“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”* What **we** need to remember is that we have the **greatest** “cause” in the world! Jesus has

commanded us to “Go and *gather disciples from all nations.*” So, let’s rally around that cause, and **do** what needs to be done.

Obviously, we will be faced with some **difficulties**. Right now, the **cancel culture** of our nation has started to focus their attention on **Christian churches**. Those people will not make it **easy** for us to **continue** with our work of spreading the Gospel of Jesus. And then there are the **financial costs**. There’s no doubt about it. When it costs you the most to put food on your table and clothes on your back, it also costs you the most to spread God’s Word. Another problem is the **shadow** which has been cast over **all** organized religion by the foolish indiscretions of many well-known TV evangelists. What people like Jim Baker or Jimmy Swaggart do, should have **no effect** whatsoever on how people view the programs and ministry of **our** congregation. Yet, many people group all religions **together**, and they say, “If **that’s** the way **Christians** act, and if that’s what **religion** is all about, then I don’t want **anything** to do with it!” And yet **another** problem, one which is confronting our **own** church body to an even **greater** degree, is that fewer and fewer young people are entering into full-time service in the Lord’s kingdom as **pastors** and **teachers**. While the amount of work in the Lord’s kingdom continues to **grow**, the number of workers continues to **fall short**.

Now, even with these and many **more** problems, I really don’t think it’s any more difficult to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world **today**, than it was in the **past**. The disciples in our text had **their** problems too, but let’s learn a **lesson** from them. What did they **do** when the **authorities** were against them? What did they **do** when they were being **misunderstood**? What did they **do** when their **workers** were thrown into prison? What did they **do** - they **prayed** - and they **prayed** because **God** was the **only** one who could really **help** them. The Bible says, “If the **Lord** does not build the house, it is **useless** for the builders to work hard over it.” It also says, “If God is **for** us, who can be **against** us?” That’s **why** we pray. We pray because it **works**!

Our text concludes by saying that God **united** those early Christians, giving them all the strength and abilities they needed to **preach** and to **witness**, so that many more would receive the gift of **eternal life** through faith in Jesus. The Lord will unite **our** hearts and minds too. Our differences can be put to the side and **forgotten**. We can turn **away** from all the things which get in the way, and **hinder** us from doing the **Lord’s** work. Let us, like those **early** disciples, **pray** for God’s guidance - in our **personal** lives, and in our **congregational** actions. Let us pray for the **wisdom** we will need to understand exactly what God would have us to do. And finally, let us sincerely **thank** our God for all His blessings - of the **past**, the



**present**, and the **future**. We ask it in Jesus' name, and may **His grace** be on us all. Amen.

### **Prayers:**

Dear Jesus our Savior, You are truly our **Good Shepherd**. You laid down Your **life** for us, Your **sheep**. It was Your great **love** for us sinners who were lost and straying, that moved You to come into this world to **live**, to **die**, and to **rise** again; that we might have a **life** with You that does not **end**. Good Shepherd, we owe You our heartfelt **thanks** and **praise**, and our continual **love** and **devotion** for all that You **have** done and **still** do, to insure our earthly and eternal **welfare**.

It is true, we have become Your **sheep** by trusting that You are our **Savior** and **God**. Nevertheless, we must confess that we still have a rebellious **Old Adam** that is **stubborn** and **sinful**, and continually leads us **astray**. Therefore, we need Your loving **patience** as our Good Shepherd, to **deliver** us from our sinful ways, to **protect** us from our own foolishness, and to **forgive** our many sins. We need You to take the evils and dangers that beset us, and turn them to our **good**. We need You to **hear** and **answer** our prayers. And **we** need to hear and heed the sound of **Your** voice, as You **speak** to us in the **Holy Scriptures**.

Lord, by Your continual presence **comfort** and **cheer** us in every journey we make through the dark, shadowy valleys of this life. **Satisfy** us with the green pastures of Your Word, and **nourish** our faith. **Quench** our thirst for righteousness with the refreshing streams of **salvation**. When we are **oppressed** from every side by troubles, distress, temptations, sickness, sin, and heartache, teach us to turn our eyes in faith to **You**, our Good Shepherd, and to cast all our cares on **You**. Refresh us with Your **help** and **guidance**, and with Your **protection** and **healing**. You alone know what is **best** for us. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

**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.**

**Hymn #374 - *“My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”***

**My shepherd will supply my need -  
Jehovah is his name.  
In pastures fresh he makes me feed  
Beside the living stream.  
He brings my wand’ring spirit back  
When I forsake his ways  
And leads me, for his mercy’s sake,  
In paths of truth and grace.**

**When I walk through the shades of death,  
His presence is my stay;  
One word of his supporting breath  
Drives all my fears away.  
His hand, in sight of all my foes,  
Will still my table spread;  
My cup with blessings overflows;  
His oil anoints my head.**

**The sure provisions of my God  
Attend me all my days;  
Oh, may his house be my abode  
And all my work be praise.  
There would I find a settled rest  
While others go and come,  
No more a stranger or a guest  
But like a child at home.**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

**The Blessing:**

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.

**C: Amen.**

**Hymn #141 - “*At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing*”**

**At the Lamb’s high feast we sing  
Praise to our victorious King,  
Who has washed us in the tide  
Flowing from his piercé side. Alleluia!**

**Mighty Victim from the sky,  
Hell’s fierce pow’rs beneath you lie.  
You have conquered in the fight;  
You have brought us life and light. Alleluia!**

**Now no more can death appall,  
Now no more the grave enthrall;  
You have opened paradise,  
And your saints in you shall rise. Alleluia!**

**Easter triumph, Easter joy!  
This alone can sin destroy;  
From sin's pow’r, Lord, set us free,  
Newborn souls in you to be. Alleluia!**

**Father, who the crown shall give,  
Savior, by whose death we live,  
Spirit, guide through all our days,  
Three in One, your name we praise. Alleluia!**