

The Daily Church Epistle

Monday, 19 April 2021

Hello Church!

Once again, I am amazed at the week's Scripture before us fitting life as we know it today so well. This week our readings for worship are Psalm 23, John 10: 1-18, and 1st John 3:18-24. Our Zoom gatherings (7 on Wednesday, 9:30 on Sunday) will focus on Psalm 23. In podcast and gathered worship, my planned sermon will draw from what it means to be sheep of the Good Shepherd from John 10 in how we be love for the youth in our lives leaning into 1st John. I invite you to read these Scriptures ahead of Sunday and ponder them for yourselves.

But before we begin opening our Bibles, how about beginning with our memories. As you think about Psalm 23, or Jesus calling himself the Good Shepherd, or St. John's words "... we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another just as he commanded us." (1st John 3:23)

What memories come to you with these passages for our Scripture this week?

It would be lovely to read a reply email from you where you share your memories with me. As it is, *The Daily Church Epistle* for Monday only allows for me to share my memories of these Scriptures with you.

In the spring of 1994, I was a student member of our seminary worship team for the week these same Scriptures were our reading. All students took turns leading worship as part of our formation as pastors. Our team leader for the last half of the semester was a woman who had applied to be our "Pastor in Residence" in the spring of 1993. Our seminary had been through a horrific time due to a much-needed restructuring that included some severe downsizing in the winter of 1993-94. The

tension on campus felt deadly as our Pastor in Residence arrived on campus right after Easter that year. As she worked with various student teams, she divided our leadership roles based on our interests in serving local churches. We agreed that as a person with a call to “Ministry with Children and the Families in the Local Church,” I would take on Psalm 23 as a children’s sermon. (Please note the Fred Rogers influence was already with me.)

That week was the beginning of my love and fascination with sheep and the shepherd as one of the Bible’s big themes to help us understand our relationship with Jesus Christ. This morning as I picked up my *Upper Room Disciplines* and saw we were back in these readings this week, my body may have been in Hudson, but my memory was in The Chapel of the Great Commission at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California. What stood out in my memory was how very much these Scriptures had blessed us as a community experiencing deep anxiety. Worship that morning was a turning point for us as a community of faith who began to move from anxiety to solace.

This morning I again limited my news intake to the weather from KSTP and the news from WEAU out of Eau Claire. WEAU’s coverage of current events in the west metro was brief and to the point, but still more than enough to trigger my anxiety. For me, this anxiety is because I worry about people I love who are physically there. I worry about our deployed Guardsmen. I am especially worried for my late cousin’s daughter and grandson who live in Daunte’s neighborhood. The deaths of their mom and her sister left them needing a cousin from their generation to step into the role of caring aunt. They are the same generations as John’s and my children and grandchildren. My “grand cousin” is a bi-racial young man who looks very much like Daunte. I could choose not to love any of these folks I named in this paragraph, but I reject that choice. Instead, I choose to hold them in prayer, especially when I feel anxious as their lives are in jeopardy.

And so, with wonder that our devotional practice has brought us these Bible treasures once again, I invite you to join me this week to use these Scriptures and your anxious moments as a personal guide for prayer this week. Even in these times, we are the sheep of the Good Shepherd. As rams, ewes, and lambs we all have our place in the community. We all have our role in loving each other just as Christ loved us.

“. . . I fear no evil, for Thou art with me . . .”

Grace always,

Rev. Dawn