

**Easter 3**  
**Sermon May 4, 2025**  
**Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19**  
**Feed my sheep**  
**Pr. Jailyn Corbin, Sk Synod**

*Living Lord, you meet us in unexpected places and surprise us with the abundance of your love. Feed us by your Word and fill us with your Spirit so that we may follow you this day, and always; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour. Amen*

*"I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing"*

*(Rev 5:13)*

"Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God. Power, riches and wisdom and strength, and honour and blessing and glory are his. Alleluia!"

The words of John today draw us not only into the liturgy but also carry us throughout the joyful celebration of Easter. Today, we join the song of the angels, the elders and the countless voices of sinners and saints, who have gathered at the throne of God.

Every time we gather, henceforth, we relive Easter morning and glimpse this heavenly vision through our songs of praise.

How wonderful it is that this time we spend together is living proof of the unity between all people of every time and place in the name of Christ!

I remember back in 2019 when world news covered a young man walking into a Jewish synagog in Poway, California. He shot multiple worshipper, including a child and the rabbi. It was brutal act of anti-semitism.

Not far from that synagog a Presbyterian congregation gathered in worship; the same church to which this young man was an active member. The congregation was in shock to learn how one of their own devout members could committed such a horrendous crime. "Anti-Semitism is not supported by our Bible." Their pastor explained to reporters.

Being well trained in his churches theology, the young man articulated very clearly how his actions were indeed biblically supported.

How heartbreaking it was for this congregation. Their grief led them on a path of deep soul searching. "We can't pretend as though we didn't have some responsibility for him" his pastor stated to media. "he was radicalized into white nationalism from within the very midst of our church,"

We may think, we live in Canada, we are different. That was not my church, and not even my denomination. Yet, all of us are surrounded by seemingly biblical ideas which serve only to weaponize the good news of the gospels. It worries me to think, we too could wake up one day to discover similar judgment embedded in our own theology of grace.

In the gospel today, Jesus hands his ministry over to Peter with one soul searching question:

Do you love me, he asks 3 times.

Yes lord I love you.  
then feed my lambs.  
Do you love me?  
Yes, lord you know I love you  
Take care of my sheep  
Do you love me?  
Yes.  
Then feed my sheep.

This question is intended to draw us back into Jesus teaching of the good shepherd and His sheep (John 10). "I am the good Shepherd. I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as the father knows me and I know the father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in the fold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock with one shepherd."

Today we consider whom are the sheep? We say with certainty this is you and me. We are saved from sin and death by the cross on which Christ was crucified. By grace you have been made children of God. We agree all Christians are equal inheritors of the kingdom by our faith in Christ. This is what we believe with our entire hearts.

But what about those other sheep. The ones not in the sheepfold? They are those who have wandered away in search of "greener pastures." They are also those who do not believe Jesus to be son of God.

Does the grace given to the entire world by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ include even these?

It's a debate which has plagued the church since the beginning. Who is included in God's kingdom? The Jews or The Gentiles? The saints or the sinners? The faithful or the unfaithful? So much hurt has been done because we take it upon ourselves to answer this question. By doing so, we put ourselves on God's throne, playing judge, jury and sometimes even executioner.

There is one God, and it is not us.

I am not God and therefore cannot answer for God. But I can love you as Jesus loves. And I can sing with you the eternal song of salvation. The song sung by every angel, and saint; by every culture and nation; every person and creature in heaven and on earth *AND* under the earth and in the sea.

I love that line from Revelation 5:13:

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing.

These words appear more than once in Scripture. And what they reveal is something breathtaking:

Even those who have fallen away, even those we might not expect, are gathered into the great hymn of creation, singing before the throne of God.

Grace, upon grace, upon grace.  
Rejoice in this vision of hope!

I will be honest with you: This vision makes me uncomfortable sometimes. There are names - real names, real faces that come to mind when I hear that every creature will sing. People who have caused harm, people I struggle to forgive, people I would rather leave outside the circle of God's grace.

But I am not God.  
And neither are you.

We are not called to decide who belongs or who does not. We are called to trust the promise made sure in Jesus' resurrection:  
A promise that the worst of our world, the worst in us has been overcome.

A promise that our baptism seals:  
That we are forgiven.  
That we are named beloved.  
That we are held by a grace far wider than we can ever imagine.

When we answer, like Peter did, "Yes, Lord, you know I love you" we are not only stepping into that love for ourselves, we are choosing to see that same divine light, that same divine grace, burning in the hearts of others. Even when it stretches us. Even when it costs us. Even when it calls us beyond the borders we would prefer to build.

Because everyone - every single one - is a sheep sought out, loved, and cherished by the Good Shepherd.

This grace does not just change the way we see God - it changes the way we live. Trusting this grace means trusting that our calling is to care for one another. And so, Jesus speaks to Peter and to us with a simple but life-shaping command: Feed my sheep.

Notice whose voice the sheep hear. It is not Peter's, not mine, and not yours. It is Christ who calls them by name. Christ who seeks them out. Christ whose death and resurrection redeems them.

When we see Christ raised from death, we witness God transforming even the worst of the world to become worthy of the kingdom. All the sheep - every last one - belong to God, who created the whole world and all who live within it.

It is not the job of a disciple to call the sheep in or out of the fold. The job of a disciple is to love and to feed and to care for.

Grace tells us there is no one: No Jew or Greek, victim or perpetrator, faithful or faithless outside of the saving grace of the Risen Christ. God's grace is for the healing of the world. This means that same healing is for you too.

If you are like me, there are times when you dwell on a mistake and replay it over and over in your mind until it feels like chains around your heart. Regret, shame, and self-criticism seem louder than God's promises.

But here is what grace has taught me:

God's forgiveness is not just something we talk about on Sundays. It is a living reality - a gift that breaks those chains.

When God says, *I forgive you*, God also says, *You can let go now. You don't have to carry this anymore.*

If you struggle with letting go of the past, here is a simple practice in self-forgiveness. Name it: In prayer, name the mistake, the emotions, the regret, the fear you are holding onto. Let the thoughts and emotions flow, acknowledging each as it passes through your mind. I find it helpful to write down whatever words and thoughts flash through my mind - no editing, no worrying - just write until the thoughts stop.

Next imagine yourself placing that paper into Christ's hands. The same hands that were wounded for our healing.

Tell God - I trust you with this. It is no longer mine to carry.

In confirmation we would write our confession on toilet paper and then flush them away. You might want to shred it, burn it, or simply imagine it flying away on the wind.

The point is not how you do it. The point is that you have given your pain to God and God has taken it away.

You might have to do this more than once. I certainly have. Some days, I pray it over and over again.

But each time I do, I am reminded: Christ's love is stronger than my failures. Christ's voice calls me not broken or guilty - but beloved.

You are not the sum of your mistakes. You are the beloved sheep for whom the Good Shepherd gave everything and whom the Risen Christ calls by name, again and again.

Let go of your fear. Do not worry about the things you did not do or should have done differently. Instead repent and forgive because Christ has already forgiven you. Love because Christ loved you first and declared you holy. Have hope because Christ is hope. And then imagine what God is preparing for us all on that day when the kingdom finally comes:

Imagine a world where all share equally in bounties of creation? One where love is the answer. Where everyone is valued no matter what your story may be.

Where it doesn't matter how you pray to God...God still hears your prayer.

Where it doesn't matter if you don't pray to God...God still knows you.

Where it doesn't matter what your possessions or status, what matters is the community they build.

Where it doesn't matter your mistakes...what matters is our shared holiness as God's created and beloved.

I, for one, cannot wait to see these things made reality by the promised kingdom.

The hymns which join all people of every time and place serve to uncover the truth about God. The beautiful story of a Lamb who exposes and overcomes a broken world. By doing so transforms our failures into Holy perfection. The kingdom of God is for all - both the lost and the found, those who have wandered, those who never left, and those grazing in other pastures. There is nothing which can remove you from the victory of Easter.

And so go out and live this victory as we sing the glory of the risen Christ now and forevermore:

"This is the feast of victory for our God. For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia."

Amen.