

Easter II

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[0:00] Of all our hearts. Be acceptable in your sight. O Lord. Our rock and our redeemer. Also called Good Shepherd Sunday.

We have as our lectionary passages. That the church says before us. We have this radiant truth. That the risen light. In Christ.

Is a light of love. This love. That we've seen in the passages read this morning. Is not a vague sentiment. It's not the mere affection.

That the world extols. It looks nothing like the world's. Expression of love. Rather it is a love revealed in sacrifice. It is a love that is.

Sustained. In suffering. And it's a love that is expressed. In following Christ. Faithfully. Obediently. And our Lord gives us this command.

[1:19] Which we're familiar with in John 13.34. A new commandment I give to you. That you love one another. Just as I have loved you. That phrase.

As I have loved you. Is everything. It shapes how we love one another. It is the measure. The shape. The source of our life.

As Christians. Those who have experienced. The overwhelming. Lavish love of Christ. Our King. Savior. And Redeemer. Who knows what it means to be forgiven.

The great debt. That we hold to him. It is from that love. As I have loved you. In that manner. Love one another. And so today we are called.

To consider that love. In three ways. We're called to consider that love. In the sacrifice of our Lord. Firstly. Secondly. We're called to consider that love.

[2:18] As an example. That he set for us. To follow. Love. And thirdly. We're called to consider that love. As the power. By which. We are led. Into the risen life.

The resurrection life. That we have in Christ. So both our epistle reading. This morning. And the gospel. Unite. In giving us this image of Christ. As the good shepherd.

The one who lays down his life. And the one who goes. Before his sheep. That they might follow. And that's a really important imagery.

For you to grasp. Shepherding. I don't know if you've seen pictures. Or images of shepherds. Sometimes you see them. With the flock in front of them.

And they're coming from. They have a shepherd's staff. Or when the bishop is coming soon. You'll see. He has a shepherd's staff. Right. And the shepherd has something like that.

[3:12] And he's behind the sheep. And he's corralling. That's actually not the image that Jesus has in mind. In Jesus' day. The shepherd goes.

Before the sheep. He goes. Before the sheep. If there is any danger. He will encounter it first. And that's the image that Jesus has.

The one who goes before his sheep. That they might then follow him. And we see that in the first reading. In the epistle reading. In the manner in which you are called. To follow the Christian calling.

So St. Peter begins with this difficult. And searching word. That we have for us. In 1 Peter chapter 2. Beginning in verse 19. For this is a gracious thing.

When mindful of God. One endures sorrows. While suffering unjustly. That's a very difficult thing.

[4:10] To just wrap your mind around. Notice here. That he does not. Peter doesn't say. Suffering is good in itself. That's not what Peter is saying. He's not calling us to be.

What are the people who like suffering? Is it masochists? Right. Yeah. That's not what Peter is advocating here. He's not saying suffering is good in itself. Rather he's saying that. Enduring unjust suffering.

With a conscience towards God. Mindful of God. In the midst of that suffering. Mindful of God. Is that manner. That patience. That endurance.

Is pleasing to him. This cuts against everything in us. Doesn't it? We are willing. Perhaps.

To endure suffering. When we deserve it. Even that probably we're not willing to do. But at least we know. We deserve this. This is. You know. But to suffer wrongly.

[5:06] For something we didn't do. To be misunderstood. To be mistreated. Or wronged. Yet remain impatient. That runs counter to everything in us.

A natural mindset is to be vindictive. To rail against such injustice. It's not a back in and of itself. To have that natural inclination.

Well Peter presses further. And he says. He advocates for endurance. And he says in verse 20. If when you do good. And suffer for it. You endure.

This is a gracious thing in the sight of God. This Christian calling to endure. This Christian calling for endurance. This Christian calling for endurance. Is not mere resignation.

In the face of injustice. It is not just passive endurance. That's not what Peter is calling for. But he's calling for active. God conscious patience. It is patience that is being called for.

[6:09] Plainly speaking. Christian meekness. Is not weakness. It is strength under control. It is mastery of one's heart.

Towards crest like love. Instead of anger. It is grace. Over the instinct to self-exaltation. That is. That requires far more strength. Than clamoring for justice. Or really when we say that. Often times we mean vengeance. Rather.

We have to be like our Lord. Patiently enduring. What does this look like? Perhaps it looks like this. A man who in his prayers.

Thanks God. Not only for his friends. And his family. And his benefactors. But goes on his knees in prayer. Even praying for his enemies.

[7:09] He counts these enemies. Among those who have not. Who have most shaped his soul. He thanks God for the suffering. That he endures at their hands.

Our God is using all of it. To shape him. To mold him. To make him more reliant on his Savior Jesus Christ. He sincerely prays. For the salvation. Of their souls.

Why? Because through them. He learns what St. Peter says in his epistle. It is commendable. If someone bears up under pain. Of unjust suffering.

Because of their conscience. So is God. It is commendable. Our Lord himself says. If you do good to those who do good to you. What credit is that to you?

True faith is revealed. Not in comfort. This is the tragic lie. Of modern Christianity. True faith is revealed.

[8:09] Not in comfort. But in hardship. If we suffer for wrongdoing. There is no glory in that. Peter tells us. But if we endure suffering.

For doing good. This pleases God. This is the disposition. Of a man and woman. Who has known the love of Christ.

Who knows that he is. He is a guilty. Injurious. Man. That is deserving of God's wrath. And God's judgment. But has been forgiven. Slate wiped clean.

Guilt taken away. Shame. Taken upon another. This is the posture. Of someone who has known the mercy of Christ. Christ. This is what we are called to.

Brothers and sisters. This is what we are called to. And we do this. Because we are meant to follow the example. Of the one who has gone before us.

[9:10] A good shepherd. Peter does not leave this calling. In an abstract ideal. He anchors all of it in Christ. He says. For this you have been called.

You have been called to this. Because Christ. Also suffered. What did he suffer for? For you. Living. Leaving you. An example. So that you might follow in his steps. Christianity is not only believing in Christ. It is following Christ.

Peter describes Christ to us. In this way. He committed no sin. Neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled. He did not revile in return.

When he suffered. And there is no suffering like the suffering of our Lord. Yea, it is a true innocent. Bearing the pain.

[10:05] And the ignominy. And the shame. And the judgment. That he did not deserve. When he suffered. He did not threaten.

But continue entrusting himself to him. Who judges justly. That language. He did not threaten. Will have been acute. In Peter's ears. He is the one who is writing it.

But he is the one who lived it. Remember that story. When Christ. Was in the garden of Gethsemane. On that day. When he was arrested. And as he begins his passion. What happens when the guards from the high priest comes.

To arrest Jesus. What does Peter do? He tries to threaten those who come. He takes the sword. And he goes hacking. He is not very good at it.

That is why he got the hair. I do not think he was aiming for a hair. He has the hair of one of the men. And what did our Lord say to him? I do not need your help.

[11:06] Peter. I do not need you to defend me. I am paraphrasing here. If I wanted to. I can call down. Legions of angels from my father.

Just one legion actually. Will do the work. And they can come. He could have threatened. He had the power to stop it. All the suffering.

He did not threaten. But continued entrusting himself. To him. Who judges rightly. That is our Lord. That is the example he set for us.

This is astonishing. Christ. The sinless one. Suffers injustice. And does not retaliate. And remember. Peter is the one who is always.

First and foremost. Among the apostles. Always resisted Christ's suffering. Not only in that scene. In Gethsemane. But even earlier. Go further back.

[12:06] The first time Jesus revealed to them. I am going to go to. Yes. I am the Messiah. Yes. You are right Peter. But I am going to Jerusalem. Not to take over.

And defeat the Romans. But to lay down my life. To die. To be put to death. What is Peter's. Natural inclination. What did he do?

He rebuked our Lord. He rebuked this Lord. He is dead set. Against Christ's suffering. Now this same St. Peter is writing. And calling us.

To suffer. Like our Lord. He sees clearly now. He sees that the way of Christ. Is the way of the cross.

The remedy for our impatience. Brothers and sisters in Christ. The remedy for our pride. The remedy for our instinct. To strike back. Is not self-discipline alone.

[13:06] It is conformity. To Christ himself. And now we come to the heart. Of Peter's message.

Verse 24. He himself. Bore our sins. In his body. On the tree. Every phrase here. Is full of meaning. He himself. Bore our sins. In his body. On the tree. He himself. No one else could do it. The shepherd did not send another.

He came himself. And he did it in his body. Not symbolically. Not. Not just. Not. This is not just mere symbolic language.

Not at a distance. He comes near. He becomes one of us. He took on a body. He bore the full weight. Of sin. In his own flesh.

[14:04] And he does it on a tree. He became a curse for us. Cursed is the one who hangs on a tree. We're told in the Bible. And he becomes a curse for us.

A place of agony. A place of shame. A place of exposure. A curse. Why? For our sins.

This is love. Not sentimental. Not but sacrificial. This is love. Sacrificial love. Not abstract. But embodied. Not distant.

But deeply personal. No. This is the example. We are to follow. The purpose of love. Is this.

That Christ's atoning death. Is not only about forgiveness. His love. For us. And his atoning death. Does indeed forgive. And cancels our debt.

[15:00] But it also transforms. Christ's love. Is transforming. That we might die to sin. Peter tells us. That we might die to sin.

And to live. To righteousness. That's the transforming work. Of Christ's love. In us. The goal. Is not merely. To be pardoned. But it's to be.

Given a new life. A victorious life. And to live. In that life. To that by his wounds. We are healed. As Peter says.

Healing here. Is not just. A quitter from guilt. But healing here. Denotes. It's not just merely forgiveness. But it's restoration. Restoration to a new life.

To a better life. To a fuller life. And then Peter gives us. This beautiful image. In verse 24. This is the image. That I want you to take with you.

[15 : 58] For you were straying like sheep. For you have now returned. To the shepherd. And the overseer. Of your souls.

We were lost. But now we are brought home. Not just forgiven. But we are kept. Guided. And cared for.

Now the gospel completes. This picture of the good shepherd. For us. That we see in John 10. Jesus says. Of himself. In John chapter 10.

I am the good shepherd. This is who Peter has been speaking of. All along. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd. Lays down his life. For the sheep. Here again.

We see sacrifice. An example. Being met perfectly. The good shepherd. Lays down his life. For the sheep. In the ancient world. Shepherds risk their lives.

[16 : 57] I just told you earlier. That the shepherd goes before the sheep. Encounters dangers. Before they do. For Christ. Our good shepherd. Even does more than that. He gives his life.

For his sheep. This is not mere accident. It is his intent. He came to do just that. To give himself. The sheep are his. They belong to him.

You belong to him. Body and soul. And he says in effect. This one is mine. I've come for him. And so he goes after that one lost sheep.

That belongs to him. That's how he went after you. You are that one lost sheep. You are mine. I will search you out. I will take you out of the ravine. I will deliver you from death.

This is how Christ comes. For all his sheep. Christ is both lamb.

[17 : 59] And shepherd. Isn't that wonderfully. That image that the Bible gives us. He is the lamb. And what does that lamb do? The lamb who takes away.

The sins of the world. But he is also shepherd. He is the one who dies. And he is also the one who leads. Jesus continues.

I know my own. And my own. Know me. This is not general knowledge now. This is personal knowledge. Intimate knowledge.

Particular. Experiential knowledge. I know my own. And my own know me. Do you know that your shepherd knows you?

He knows your weakness. He knows your fears. Your temptations. He knows your wanderings. And as Isaiah says.

[18 : 55] He gathers the lambs in his arms. He knows all of it. And he gathers you in his arms. Not only does he know us. We are also told that we know his voice.

There is a recognition. A familiarity. A love. To know Christ is to know the love of God himself.

The sheep hears his voice. The sheep knows his voice. Jesus expands this vision. And he says. I have other sheep.

That are not of this fold. I must bring them also. So there will be one flock and one shepherd. Here is the heart of our shepherd. His heart is wider.

Than the visible fold. That we see before us this morning. He is gathering. He is gathering people from every place. From every tribe. Every tongue. Uniting them.

[19 : 52] Not by culture. Or status. But he is uniting them by faith and love. And this has implications for you and me this morning. We are not only sheep.

To be gathered in. And we have been gathered in. Thanks be to God. But we are also called to reflect the shepherd's heart. And to join him in his work. Of gathering sheep.

I have other sheep. But are not of this fold. I must bring them also. Are you. Following the example of your shepherd.

Striving to invite. Other sheep into the fold. The collect for today actually. Perfectly. Helps us to respond in prayer. And in faith.

To these truths that we have just seen. In it. We see two things about Christ. Our shepherd. He is a sacrifice. As we have been saying. He is. By his sacrifice. We are forgiven. But he is also our example.

[20 : 55] We follow his example. In this new transformed life. That we have in Christ. And so we make two petitions. As we see this. We ask God.

That we may receive his pardon. With thankfulness. With a heart of gratitude. But we also ask him. That we may follow his example. With faithfulness. We ask.

Then. What does this mean for us? It means that we are to reinterpret our lives. Through the lens of the good shepherd. The prophet Jeremiah says. I listened and heard.

But they did not speak rightly. We often speak about suffering. Hardship. Even death. In ways shaped by the world. Not by God's truth. It is so easy for us to speak of the suffering. And hardship. In our life. And in the world around us. But we do not speak of it. In a Christ like. Crucifoned manner. We do not see that Christ.

[21 : 52] Even uses. Even those sufferings. To shape us. To mold us. Into his image. But what if we do? What if we see our sorrows. As the shepherd calling us closer to himself.

What if we see our afflictions. As his way of loosening our grip. On the world. What if we see the opposition that we face.

Daily. As a tool. That our good shepherd uses. To shape us. Into Christ likeness. How will that reorient us.

In the world that we live in. How will that help us. To have patience. And endurance. Rightly. Do you know this brothers and sisters. That even death.

Itself. Is not lost. For the believer. Because what does death mean. For you and me. Who are in Christ. Christ. It just means.

[22 : 57] That it's. Us being gathered in. To God's presence. Death. Does not have the final word. That's what this Eastertide. Is all about. As we live in this new resurrection life.

Death. Death has been defeated. We have nothing to fear. Yes. I do know. That the. The. The. The afflictions. That the world. Inflict. On those who are of Christ.

It's nothing to. To. To. Just. Um. It's severe. It will cost you. A lot. Maybe it has cost many of you. I'm sure many of you.

It has cost you some here. But nothing the world. Inflicts. Can overcome you.

Not even death. So finally. We are called to follow. Christ suffered for you. That you might follow in his steps. So if we live with the spirit.

[23 : 54] With the spirit. Of the lamb. Of our good shepherd. Gentle. Patient. Enduring. Then the shepherd will recognize us as his own. As we follow his example. We are his flock.

We are under his care. We are kept. We are destined for his kingdom. And one day. He will gather us. He will set us at his right hand.

And as. St. Peter says. And as Jesus says. In the gospel. There will be one flock. One shepherd.

We await that day. We await that day. And as we await that day. Let us all fast. Trust in his sacrifice.

Follow his example. Live in his love. The risen Christ. A good shepherd calls. He calls.

[24 : 53] Do you hear his voice? Will you follow. Where he leads. In the name of the father. And of the son. And of the holy spirit.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.