

## Worship Resources - *Going The Distance* - <https://youtu.be/yFxQ0ihsaLI>

Easter 4, Year B,

25<sup>th</sup> April, 2021

**1 John 3:16-24 CEV / John 10:11-18 CEV**

### **Prelude**      *Let's Sing Unto The Lord*

Music by Carlos Rosas, Played by Annie Center,

<https://youtu.be/AjOsFjI2sLo>

### **Intro / Call to Worship**

The call of Christ is this: **Love one another.**

The law and the prophets teach this: **Love one another.**

The world calls us to fulfill our desires, **But Christ commands us to love one another.**

We do this best not in word or speech, **But in truth and action.**

Beloved, let us love one another, **For Christ first loved us.**

**Come, worship God, who is Love.**

**I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.**

**As we gather today, let's take time to enjoy an old hymn and reflect on where we turn for guidance in our own lives.**

### **Reflection Video**      *Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us*

music by William B. Bradbury,

congregational singing by the Grace Community Church,

Sun Valley, CA, posted to YouTube by Martijn de Groot

[https://youtu.be/EQd2sh-nQ\\_M](https://youtu.be/EQd2sh-nQ_M)

### **Invocation**

Lord Jesus Christ, the light of your love shines on, illuminating the places where you are present. As the bewildered disciples pondered the stories of your appearance, you penetrated the darkness of their fear and doubt with your word of peace. You showed them the appalling marks of evil pierced on your hands and feet. You opened their minds to understand why you had to die to defeat such evil and death. Increase our understanding, we pray, and open our minds and hearts to receive you, Lord. Speak your word of peace to us and let your love shine on any dark areas in our lives. May this worship which we offer in your name be a worthy response to your love and your sacrifice for us. Amen.

**We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (*light candle*) Amen.**

**In our epistle reading today, we hear of the importance love should have in our lives, and what that should look like. As we hear these words from 1 John, let's think about what role love plays in our own lives, and how it compares with these instructions from scripture.**

## **Epistle Reading      1 John 3:16-24 CEV**

We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That's why we must give our lives for each other.

If we have all we need and see one of our own people in need, we must have pity on that person, or else we cannot say we love God.

Children, you show love for others by truly helping them, and not merely by talking about it.

When we love others, we know that we belong to the truth, and we feel at ease in the presence of God.

But even if we don't feel at ease, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything.

Dear friends, if we feel at ease in the presence of God, we will have the courage to come near him.

He will give us whatever we ask, because we obey him and do what pleases him.

God wants us to have faith in his Son Jesus Christ and to love each other. This is also what Jesus taught us to do.

If we obey God's commandments, we will stay one in our hearts with him, and he will stay one with us. The Spirit that he has given us is proof that we are one with him.

## **Scripture Video      1 John 3:16-24 *Love In Truth And Action***

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/7jtBbFLopv4>

## **A Time of Prayer**

**Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: [vicarglenn@gmail.com](mailto:vicarglenn@gmail.com), and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.**

## **Joys and Concerns**

Today, let's remember JoAnn and Bill Shoemaker. JoAnn has been ill for a few months with several conditions that have progressed and landed her in the hospital for a week. She has now moved to rehab but has a long road ahead. Please keep her in your prayers for healing, and Bill, who may have to go to a nursing home until JoAnn is well enough to return home to care for him.

Also keep Susanna Thill in your prayers as she undergoes surgery this week. May her surgery be uneventful and bring relief.

Let's also remember Patti Berg as well as she struggles with sadness and the stress that can bring to daily life.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

## **Pastoral Prayer**

**O God, our loving Shepherd,**

you come to us with the strength and love of a father, and the tender mercies, patience and protection of a loving mother. We see you in the very living of our days, and yet we so often fail to praise you or to offer our burdens to you.

Hear us, Lord, as we lift to you our prayers for others and for ourselves.

We pray for those in need—those who hunger or are homeless.

We pray for those in pain—the abused, brokenhearted and lonely.

We pray for the sick in body and in mind, and for those who grieve.

For the life of this community and all those who put their trust in you for all their todays and all their tomorrows, we pray that your lovingkindness to the world would be offered through our hands, our words, our deeds, our hearts.

Free us, Lord, as your own people, to sing your praise in the work of our everyday lives. In those comings and goings of our simple and complicated living, make us instruments of your peace and grace in weary days with weary people.

Bless our memories, O God, that in our remembering we may partake of the mystery that is eternal life in its fullness. For we pray in the presence of your risen Christ, our Lord and Savior. **Amen.**

**In our Gospel reading this morning, we hear a lot of imagery of how a shepherd guards and cares for their sheep. As we listen to these words from John, let's think about how our Savior cares for us, and how we are called to mirror that behavior.**

## **Gospel Reading**

### **John 10:11-18 CEV**

I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep.

Hired workers are not like the shepherd. They don't own the sheep, and when they see a wolf coming, they run off and leave the sheep. Then the wolf attacks and scatters the flock.

Hired workers run away because they don't care about the sheep.

I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and they know me.

Just as the Father knows me, I know the Father, and I give up my life for my sheep.

I have other sheep that are not in this sheep pen. I must bring them together too, when they hear my voice. Then there will be one flock of sheep and one shepherd.

The Father loves me, because I give up my life, so that I may receive it back again.

No one takes my life from me. I give it up willingly! I have the power to give it up and the power to receive it back again, just as my Father commanded me to do.

## Scripture Video

## John 10:11-18 - *Christ The Shepherd*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/ynYxyY1egPc>

## Message – *Going The Distance*

So when we think about our Christian faith and the gospel, what exactly is the “good news” that comes to mind? I'm sure for most of us, central to that reflection would be our personal salvation. A hallmark of Christian theology since the beginning of this Jesus movement has been that through believing one secures a place in eternity, a condo in heaven as it were, where we can rest assured that death is not the end for us. And for a big chunk of our history, that's been the main selling point we've used in seeking to bring others to the faith, in “saving” their souls. When you pair that with a very negative alternative, the scary image of a fiery torture for eternity for not joining the club, then you have a pretty powerful marketing technique which worked well for centuries. You make it personal and individual, and people can identify with your message because it speaks to the fear and anxiety we all have about death and the uncertainty of the afterlife.

So for centuries now, much of our focus has been very much on our own personal faith, and the salvation it provides. We've worried about our own personal morality, and how that impacts our assurance of salvation. As a result, we've developed a very personal faith, based on the salvation through grace that Paul assures us is ours for the taking. But is that everything? Is that all there is to it? Today's epistle reading reminds us of the contradiction of the Christian faith that we all must come to terms with.

Paul tells us we are justified by faith through grace, yet James tells us that faith without works is dead. And along comes John's epistle that tells us God's love abides in us only if it is manifested in truth and action. So what are we to make of all this?

Well, the key according to John is love. John's epistles talk a lot about love. That God is love, and "whoever does not love, does not know God." He goes further to say that love and action are inseparable. Love is known in action. It is through God's action that love is shown. God's action in sending Jesus Christ into the world, and Christ's action of willingly offering everything in order to ensure that we would have the opportunity for salvation. Like the good shepherd in our gospel reading, love is being willing to lay down one's life for the flock. Does the same test apply to us? How do others know what love is in our heart?

Our first reading this morning makes that clear. Likewise for us, it is through our actions as well. We're called to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. Sounds pretty dramatic, doesn't it? When we hear phrases like that, our imaginations pull up images of rescue workers risking their lives to save others, or soldiers on the battlefield, risking live fire to save a fallen comrade. We think of the dramatic examples of real life and death situations when we hear those kinds of phrases, extraordinary situations of heroism. But for Christians, the concept of self-sacrifice should be one that is ordinary, not extraordinary. John indicates we ought to "lay down" our lives, which isn't necessarily a grand challenge to heroic Christians, but an everyday commandment to ordinary, everyday Christians.

The Christian life is a life laid down for others, a life built on self-sacrifice. But what does that sacrifice look like in reality? Certainly it is true that in certain times and places, it can be the real deal. The early Christian church certainly had its share of martyrs. And in more modern times, we know that when we stand beside victims of injustice or hate or racism, we might become the next victim. If we go into situations of violence or war and share a witness for peace and healing, then we take the risk that the next bullet or bomb may have our name on it.

As an alumnus of Christian Peacemaker Teams, I know that feeling well. In every age, Christians have acted out of love, going where they did not have to go and suffering what they could easily avoid. But for the majority of us, the stakes are much lower. We are not all called to go to war zones or to risk our lives to save others on a daily basis. Many will never encounter the opportunity to literally lay down their life for another. But the principle is the same in the course of what we would call an "ordinary" life.

To "lay down our lives," at its core, can mean any number of ways that we lay aside our claim to our own lives. We lay down our lives when we put others first. We lay down our

lives when we make time for others. We lay down our lives when we put aside the human desire to live for ourselves and allow God's love to orient us towards the needs of others. In a world where almost half the people live on less than two dollars per day, what does it look like to take action, to put others before ourselves? In a city and county with over 11,000 people without stable housing, what does love look like?

When we think of the big picture of suffering in the world, and in our larger community, it can be overwhelming. That's why John narrows it down to singular language, when we see a "brother or sister in need." That implies the person in front of us, the person we encounter in our "ordinary" lives. Not that we shouldn't work to solve the bigger picture, but we are never excused from the person in front of us.

Let me share an example with you. There's a story about a group of guys who were returning from playing golf in rural Georgia. As they drove down a two-lane road they came up on a smoldering house. It was obvious it had burned during the night. Standing in front of the smoldering ashes was a distraught woman with a small child. The men stopped the car and asked if she was okay. She said nobody was hurt but she had lost all she had. The men each pulled a few dollars out of their pockets and handed it to the woman and said, "God bless you." They drove off in silence. After a couple of miles the driver stopped the car and took off his golf hat. He turned to his buddies and said, "Okay, take out your wallets and give me all the money you have and we're going to go back and give it to her." They emptied their wallets and one man even wrote a large check. The amount in the hat totaled over \$1,000. When they returned, they found the woman standing in the same place. The driver got out and said to the woman, "We just gave you some money, but we made a mistake. Would you be willing to give me all that money back?" The woman looked at him as if he was crazy, but without complaining she gave him the few dollars they had given her. The driver then added that money to that inside his hat and handed her the whole hat. Then he said, "We'll be sending you more. That is love action at work."

We've all heard the phrase of "counting the cost" of our faith. Well, this is where the rubber meets the road. When we confess to being Christian, to believing in Jesus Christ and assenting to the truth of the gospel, do we really give thought to what all that truth entails? From the very beginning of our walk, it means a life of taking risk, of laying down our lives daily for others, in whatever form that takes.

Faith and love come bound together as a single package. While it is true that faith alone is all that is required of us for our salvation, it is also true that faith is never alone, love always comes along for the ride, and that love is revealed in action. Faith and love together are the gifts from God of a single grace. We cannot receive one without the other. So you may say,

“I don’t know how to help the brother or sister in need in front of the QFC or outside the Starbucks. How do I know the best way to help without knowing their circumstances? I may be enabling harmful addictions or behavior.” That is very true.

How do we find out a person’s story? We ask them. How do we show them love? We acknowledge their existence. How do we solve the problems of those we encounter face? That’s the call to action I’m giving you. Our gospel lesson this morning talks about how a good shepherd cares for and protects his or her sheep. How are we shepherding the lost sheep we encounter? The stray lamb in the QFC parking lot on Northgate and Roosevelt? The lost ewe in front of Value Village in Linwood? The confused ram outside Fred Meyer or Grocery Outlet in Lake City, or in the Albertson’s parking lot in Lake Forest Park?

What else can I do besides give them the couple of bucks I might have in my pocket, not knowing where that money will go once they step outside the church doors. Who can we work with to find solutions to these problems? What resources can we find to ensure we are caring for our brothers and sisters in need? And finally, what can we give in our own time, effort, and goods to demonstrate God’s love in us through our action. If we work together to find the answers to those questions, what better way to show who we are to our community, to show the love our faith calls us to, to show what true Christians look like. I pray we accept the challenge. Amen.

## **Call to Serve.**

The Shepherd cares for us, providing all that we need in abundance.

The Shepherd calls us to love one another in truth and action.

May our gifts reflect our trust in the Shepherd’s care.

May our offerings show our willingness to love one another.

**As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today, we listen to the following song played by Annie, let's give some thought as to how we might be good shepherds to those around us this week, and how we might lay our own lives down for others in our everyday lives.**

## A Time for Reflection

### ***Reflection on the Word [Video]***

<https://youtu.be/Z3uloMY0YOc>

### ***Come And See***

music by Marilyn Houser Hamm,  
played by Annie Center

## The Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of love,  
you abide with us;  
you provide for all our needs  
and guide us in your ways.  
Out of gratitude for your care,  
we bring our gifts before you.  
Use them for your work of caring,  
that all may feast at the table of abundance,  
walk without fear,  
and drink deeply  
from the cup of compassion. Amen.

## Blessing/Assurance

When our hearts condemn us for failing to love one another, we remember that God is greater than our hearts. God knows us, and loves us still, and forgives us for our shortcomings. You are forgiven. Extend that same grace and forgiveness to others. You are loved, so share this love with one another. You have no condemnation in Christ Jesus our Lord. Go and share the good news. Amen.

As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.

## Postlude

### ***Je louerai l'Eternel***

music by Claude Fraydsse, acc. By Marilyn Houser Hamm,  
played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/vvVESxfmjSI>