

**First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park
July 18, 2021 11:00am worship**

***Please stand**

Prelude

***Call to Worship (Responsive)**

Christ says, come away to a deserted place and rest a while.

God calls us to quiet and rest, even as we continue to minister to those in need.

***Hymn**

“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms”

Red Hymnal p 133

The Prayer of the Day (Unison)

Holy One, we want to be the sheep of your pasture. Care for us, feed us, and lead us, we pray. Once we are strengthened by your presence, raise us up to be shepherds ourselves who tend to those who fear and dismay. Amen

The Call to Confession

Let us confess our sin, confident in God’s love for us.

The Prayer of Confession (Unison)

God of green pastures, we confess that we can get so busy and distracted that we lose sight of your love and care for us. We forget to live in gratitude and fail to live lives of goodness and mercy. Forgive us, heal us, and lead us down gentle paths that restore our souls. Amen.

In silence

The Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ, you have been restored to the grace of God. Our Lord Jesus gives us rest and peace.

Hymn

“In The Garden”

Red Hymnal p 314

The Prayer of Illumination (Unison)

May the reading of your Word draw near to you those of us once far off. May the hearing of your Word break down the dividing walls between us, for Jesus Christ, your living Word, is our peace. Amen

Old Testament

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Old Testament p 725

1 Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord.

2 Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So, I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord.

3 Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

4 I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord

5 The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

The Word of God, for the People of God

Thanks be to God!

Psalter (Responsive)

Psalms 23

Red Hymnal p 754

1 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me

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

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Epistle**Ephesians 2:11-22****New Testament p 192-193**

11 So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision"—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—

12 remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,

16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

17 So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;

18 for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

21 In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;

22 in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

The Word of God, for the People of God

Thanks be to God!

Gospel*Mark 6:30-34, 53-56****New Testament p 41-42**

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught.

31 He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.

32 And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them.

34 As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored the boat.

54 When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him,

55 and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was.

56 And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.

The Word of God, for the People of God

Thanks be to God!

Sermon**Guidance of Presence****Rev. Caitlyn Nesbit**

This week we are continuing our deep dive into the Psalms as we seek to hear how they reveal God's guidance through God's character. Starting in August we will begin a new sermon series that follows the gospels, exploring what they say about living bread. So far in this series we have looked at how God guides us through hope and righteousness. Today we are going to explore how God guides us through presence. Let's pray and begin.

Prayer.

Our psalm for this week is Psalm 23. If this Psalm sounds familiar, that makes sense. This is by far the most well-known psalm, and even may be the most well-known scripture passage. John 3:16 may give it a run for its money, but it is pretty close. Psalm 23 has not only popularity among people of Christian faith, but also has secular popularity and is a source of comfort to many.

We most often seek comfort in this psalm through death and dying. Tomorrow, this is one of the verses that we will be reading as we celebrate the life of Carol Murphy. And there is a good reason for that; this psalm offers us insight into how God walks with us during even the darkest and most difficult times of our lives. Often, we put this psalm so strictly in the category of comfort during our times of grief that we miss out on what it has to say about God's presence during the rest of our lives. For this morning, I would like to walk us through this psalm, and then look again at how we still use Psalm 23 now.

Last week we talked a little about how the psalms came from a people at different points during the Babylonian exile, a heartbreaking time in which the people of Israel sought to understand how God could let this happen to them. So, when this psalm was written the psalmist was under the rule of an opposing kingdom. Now, I say that because when we are looking at this psalm, and what it means in an everyday setting, the word shepherd becomes very important. Verse one reads:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

On one level, it is important as an acknowledgement as something who guides us as shepherds do. Isaiah also refers to God as a shepherd in terms of Exodus and guiding God's people to freedom, making being a shepherd also a part of God's character.

On another level, during the time when this psalm was written, kings were often referred to as shepherds. They were expected to guide and care for their people as shepherds do. God being referred to as shepherd here, pair with the “shall not want,” is an acknowledgement that God is the ultimate king, ultimate shepherd. Where kings so often fail at caring for their people throughout their lives, God does not and will not fail. So, when we hear that connection between God and shepherd, we are also hearing the psalmist claim loyalty to God. Verses 2 and 3 continue to affirm this absolute care:

*He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.*

There is more meaning embedded into each of these verses, but the primary purpose is to reveal how God takes care of everything that the psalmist needs to stay alive. Food, water, safety, everything that we need to be cared for God does because of who God is, that's the name's sake part. Jumping a little, the goodness and mercy that is mentioned in verse 6, those are also essential character traits of God that are being revealed here throughout this psalm.

Now verse 4 is where we really get to the heart of this psalm:

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.*

Verse 4 is where the purpose of the psalm is most clearly revealed, and that is to say through even the most difficult, scary, and life-threatening situations we face, God is enough.¹ In some translations of the Bible the word that here is translated as “darkness” (sal-ma-vet) is instead translated as “shadow of death.” We find this word translated as “darkness” or “deep darkness” 7 other times in the Hebrew scriptures. But we also find this same word in Job used describe the realm of the dead.

This is important because it shows us a couple of different ways that this psalm can be interpreted. It can mean walk through the darkest, most difficult parts of life or it can mean walking through grief, through death and dying. OR it can mean both. Death, dying, grief are for many of us the darkest days of our lives. It can also apply to multiple situations, there is no saying it isn't meant for that. What is clear is that even in the most difficult of times, God's presence guides us.

Even more so, God provides for us the midst. I fear no evil. In the darkest of hours, the most painful and scary of situations or moments in our lives, God provides. There is nothing to fear because we are not alone. God is always present.

The rod mention is pointing again to the aspect of God's authority and rule, much like the connection between shepherd and king. And following that closely with “they comfort me” is a statement towards God's sovereignty and the powerful presence that God has in all moments of our lives being a comfort.

I say verse 4 is the heart because everything else in this psalm is really centered around this good news that we find here in verse 4. And that is, no matter what, God is enough. In the face of death, God is enough, in the face of tragedy, God is enough, in the face of the most challenging of obstacles we face in life, God is enough. And in the everyday, ordinary things, God is enough. We find that laid out clearly for us in verses 5 and 6.

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

*6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.*

The preparing of a table is the host version of what the shepherd in the pasture in verse 2 does. God, as the host, provides for us as the guests. Makes sure we have food, something to drink, shelter; this is a statement about God in the ordinary, everyday needs that we have. God even provides an abundance of anything we could ever need. And does it in front of our enemies. God isn't trying to keep this on the DL or get us the help we need like it's a covert mission. God flaunts God's greatness towards us, that claim God has placed on our lives. The trials we face in life don't diminish God's greatness because God shows up right beside us through it all.

Then, we are again reminded of how God's goodness and mercy is always following us. These are the character traits about God that are revealed through this psalm. It is also a reminder that this is valid in the everyday part of life, not just the highs and lows that we experience in life. And finally, the reference to the house of the Lord is taking this very personal, individual prayer and applying it to the greater community.

So that is the deep dive, the kind of Bible study version of Psalm 23. Looking at how Psalm 23 relates to us today is actually a lot easier than when looking at the other psalms. And that is primarily because we still use it today. As I have mentioned, that is one of the scripture passages that I will be using in a celebration of life service tomorrow. It is one that we often seek to find comfort in. So, there are two points that I want to touch on this morning about how we still live out the good news that no matter what, God is enough.

1. God is enough.

¹ NIB 768

And first, that is that God is enough. We all live in the United States. I don't think it comes as a shock to any of us that we live in a heavily consumer driven world. We always feel like we don't have enough, we need more.

My maiden name is Butler. Now we Butlers are sale shoppers. If you don't know what that means, you are blessed. If we see a sale, there it is nearly impossible for us to pass it up. A few years ago, I was in my grandpa's kitchen, who now lives alone, and saw 4 boxes of the same cereal. Because it was on sale. When I was younger, I convinced my grandparents that I had to have this skateboard that was on sale, they bought 4.

Usually, we think being a part of a consumer driven world means that we yearn after having the best or newest thing, which is true to an extent. But being a part of a consumer driven world also means that we live in a society that influences what we think we want and what we need, and often we end up with 4 of something that we only really wanted 1 of. We live in this mindset of scarcity where we are easily convinced, we do not have enough, anyone try to buy toilet paper last March. It has real effects on how we live.

What we hear in this psalm is a reminder that God is enough. The salvation that Christ offers us is more than sufficient. We don't need to live with a mindset a scarcity because God has given and will give more than we need. My cup overflows. Now this is much easier said than done, I understand that. We will touch on it again when we get to our challenge for the week, because of course there is a challenge this week.

2. God walks with us through the darkness.

When I was in seminary I served for a year as a hospital chaplain, an over my year there I realized how powerful Psalm 23 can be. Especially powerful for us when we receive a diagnosis that has a long road to recovery. If you are a cancer survivor, battle cancer, or have a loved one who is or has fought cancer, you know how difficult of a road is before anyone with this diagnosis.

Within my first month working at the hospital, I met Sandy. Sandy was in her mid-50s and had come into the ER with extreme back pain. Within a few days at the hospital, it was discovered that she had cancer, and the cancer had spread throughout her entire body. One of the things that never ceased to amaze me about Sandy was the strength of her spirit. That isn't to say she was never sad, angry, or frustrated. At one point or another she was all of those things. Yet, she always knew that God was with her in everything she faced. After a couple of months in hospice care Sandy passed away. And the strength of her spirit, the conviction and comfort she held knowing that God was beside her, was passed on to her family as they grieved their loss.

Life is always sunshine. It isn't always fair or easy. The good news is that we don't have a good who only shows up with the path before us is well paved and easy to travel. We have a God that shows up in the thick of it. Who walks beside us as we face our troubles? And we know that no matter what we face, we are never alone.

One of the things that Sandy always did when we met was share what she was grateful for that day. Sometimes it was how God reached her through her church family, sometimes it was the sunshine, and sometimes it was a good health day. That sense of gratitude helped her to pin point where God was in the midst of her struggles.

And this is our challenge for the week. I invite you to join me as every day we reflect on one thing you are grateful for. A lot of people keep gratitude journals, I am horrible at keeping up with journals, but I actually write this on my to do list for the day. One thing that I am grateful for, one gift I am grateful God is giving me today.

The beauty in daily gratitude is it not only helps us identify where God is close in our lives, through everything we face, it also helps us move away from the mindset of scarcity. When we are feeling like we don't have enough, pinpointing exactly where God is active helps us to see the abundance in our lives. It reminds us of the many ways that God shows up daily. And it reminds us that no matter what, God is enough.

Let's pray to close.

The Prayers of Intercession

The Lord's Prayer (Unison)

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. Amen.**

The Invitation to the Offering

God spreads a table of blessings before us. Let us express our gratitude by giving a portion of what has been given to us.

The Offertory Music

***The Doxology**

“ Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”

Red Hymnal p 95

***The Prayer of Thanksgiving (Unison)**

God of green pastures and still waters, bless these gifts that we have been given that they may become part of your banquet for the world. Amen.

***The Hymn**

“Do, Lord, Remember Me”

Red Hymnal p 527

***The Benediction**

Postlude

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Household Prayer: Morning

Holy One, thank you for the gift of this new day. Please help me to stay mindful of your creation and your teachings as I travel through it. Empower me to see and spread the good news of your grace for all people. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

Holy One, thank you for the gift of today. Thank you for all the ways that I saw your glory and learned your teachings beyond speech and words. As I drift to sleep this night, may the meditations of my heart draw me closer to you, my Rock and my Redeemer. Amen.

Church Council – Finance – Trustees
There will be a meeting this Wednesday, July 21st at 7 pm
Please plan to attend

***THIS WEEK AT FUMCEP**

SUNDAY	July 18	11:00 a 7:00 p	Worship Service Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting
MONDAY	July 19		
TUESDAY	July 20	9 a – noon	Music Lessons
WEDNESDAY	July 21	7 p	Church Council – Finance - Trustees
THURSDAY	July 22		
FRIDAY	July 23		
SATURDAY	July 24	10 a	Prayer Shawls
NEXT SUNDAY	July 25	11:00 a 7:00 p	Worship Service Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting

OUR CHURCH STAFF

Rev. Caitlyn Nesbit, Pastor, pastorcaitlynnesbit@gmail.com

Ray Paschke, Accompanist

Virginia Franson, Nursery Attendant

First United Methodist Church of Evergreen Park

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PEOPLE TO KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS:

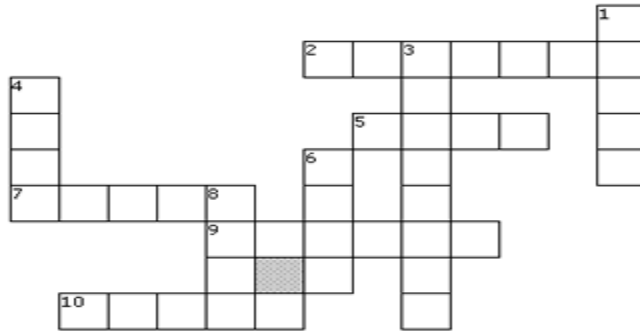
Ruth Fuss, Ardith Inman, Freddie and Bessie Kendrick and Bessie’s mom Ruth Jones,

Richard Mezera, Greg and Claudia Manow, Ed and Georgeen Slee,

Prayer Shawl and Prayer Bear Recipients; Past and Present Servicepersons

The Lord Is My Shepherd

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Psalm 23:1



ACROSS

2. An area with grass or other vegetation for sheep or cattle to graze on
5. To be frightened of something
7. A building or dwelling place for a family
9. An area of low land between mountains or hills
10. An article of furniture upon which we eat our meals

DOWN

1. To show kindness, compassion, and forgiveness
3. One who herds, guards, and tends sheep
4. The route along which something travels
6. To go or travel on foot
8. The quality of being morally bad or wrong; wicked



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IN PERSON WORSHIP SUNDAY @ 11 a.m.