

**WESTMINSTER CHURCH
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5**

**“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”**

**May 8th, 2022
Mother’s Day**



...We Gather to Worship God...

Prelude

Call to Worship

We’ve come to worship God, who loved us before we were yet born, who knows us even better than we know ourselves, whose presence never leaves us, and whose love for us never ceases.

This is our God.

Let’s worship together!

(based on themes from

Psalms 139)

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and w

Birthday Train: We celebrate three birthdays this week;

May 8th Roger Fremlin

May 9th Marla Pritchard

May 11th Ben Pritchard

Happy Birthday to all three of our dear friends.

Baby Bottle Campaign: You can fill a bottle physically with change and bring it back on Father's Day, or go online to www.algomapregnancy.com and click on the links for the Baby Bottle Campaign and fill a virtual Baby Bottle.

June Communion Date: June 12th

Stewardship:

At this time Session would like to encourage the congregation to consider several ways to continue your contributions to Westminster Church. If you are already on PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) we thank you for your continued support. You may use the regular mail. You may use the Brock Street mail slot and drop it off if you are passing by (cheques only please). You may use e-transfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca. You may prayerfully consider joining PAR. We thank you for your continued prayerful and financial support of our mission at Westminster.

Hymn: The Lord's my shepherd

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, in whom we live and move and have our being, you have revealed yourself to our world in the person of Jesus Christ for which we give you thanks and praise. We thank you for calling us together today to worship you as a community of faith and to confess together that you are our shepherd. You are the One we seek for guidance, comfort, and care. You are the One who has blessed us with the gift of eternal life through faith in Christ. To you we give all glory and honour.

O God our Redeemer, we confess before you today our sins and ask that you would cleanse us from all our fallen ways, and remove from us our love of following our own paths. Forgive us for listening to voices other than yours, voices which lead us onto paths where selfishness, corruption, greed and injustice take over. Help us to first hear the voice of our shepherd over all other clamouring voices and then empower us to follow the voice of our shepherd to streams of living waters. Let our forgiven lives reflect the wise and solid instruction you give to your children. Hear us now Lord as we pray as Jesus taught us to pray saying, Our Father.....

Amen

...We Listen to God's Word...

Word of God:

Old Testament: Psalm 23

New Testament: Revelations 7:9-17; John 10:22-30

Hymn: When Mothers of Salem (attached)

Message: Psalm 23; Relations

Many, many years ago now, I was a young boy. I know it's hard to believe this, but I was, a young child and so were you. I am sure I share this memory with all of you. Of happy summer evenings playing outside with our friends until we heard in the distance the voices of our mothers calling us home for bed. Now I know we all share this one truth, that we all knew the sound of our mother's voice. We didn't have to look towards our houses, or ask our friends if they heard our mothers, we knew the sound of our mothers' voices calling us home.

We also knew by the sound of the voice and how many of our given names were listed how much trouble we were in, but that's another story. Knowing the voice of our mothers begins very early in our lives, and some studies show that as early as the 25th week of pregnancy your baby can hear your voice and recognize it. From before we are born, we know our mother's voices.

I want to acknowledge today all the mothers voices we remember today, the ones we miss, the ones we still hear, and I want to acknowledge the special privilege that this day gives them that can never equal the value that their voices gave us. The saying is true: the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.

But you may also maybe agree with me that there is a time limit on the previous saying. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, has a time limit because other voices begin to come into our lives as we grow. Other voices that give different advice, sometimes seemingly attractive advice that differs from the advice of the first voice that loved us so much. This is not likely news to any of us...nor is it news to our faith. It is often not recognized as it should be, but the book of Proverbs is written in the voice of a mother speaking to her young son about the ways of the life and the dangers of the world, especially the dangers of the heart.

Our scripture passage from John today is about hearing the voice of our shepherd Jesus. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. 28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."

I need to go over a few characteristics about sheep for us to fully understand the meaning of this text for us. First..sheep need to be led. As individuals, sheep are capable of making the dumbest choices. Left to themselves, sheep will wander into incredible danger.

On the other, and this is central to our text today...sheep know the voice of their shepherd. The story is told by a man who came across a watering hole in the Middle East where several shepherds and herds of sheep were intermingled. It was impossible to distinguish whose sheep were whose. The man watched as first one shepherd went to stand away from the watering hole and began calling out "Manna, Manna, Manna", which in Arabic means "follow me, follow me, follow me", and immediately sheep began separating from the huge mass and meandered over to the shepherd. The man watched as amazingly the other shepherds conducted the same ritual with the same results. He then said to the third shepherd, "I would like to try that. Let me put on your cloak and turban and see if I can get the rest of the sheep to follow me."

The shepherd smiled knowingly as the traveler wrapped himself in the cloak, put the turban on his head and called out, "Manah. Manah." The sheep did not respond to the stranger's voice. Not one of them moved toward him. "Will the sheep ever follow someone other than you?" The traveler asked. "Oh yes," the shepherd replied, "sometimes a sheep gets sick, and then it will follow anyone."

These are some of the tales of sheep that we need to know to understand the scriptures today. We need to know that sheep can be intensely loyal to their shepherd and that they know the voice of their Shepherd. We need to know that if a herd of sheep are sleeping, the shepherd can walk right through the herd and not one of them will move, but if a stranger sets foot among them pandemonium will erupt. Sheep not only know the voice of their Shepherd, they know the sounds of his footsteps as well.

In our gospel passage this week, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand."

Following the Shepherd is the content of our 23rd Psalm. For those over the years who have heard the voice of the Shepherd ringing in their hearts this psalm has had special meaning. In times of crisis, the theme of "walking through the valley of the shadow of death" knowing that the Shepherd is there too, has given great comfort to those who are sick and of course, at funerals. But if this is the only theme that speaks to us from this passage, then that is regrettable. Because this psalm is more about how we should live, then how we should die.

Following Christ as our Shepherd means that he will lead us down the right paths. And this is more than just a nod towards moral and virtuous living, though you know Christ calls you to this as well. Following paths of righteousness means living for and wanting the right things. You see, as we walk with Christ we begin to understand something about

God. We begin to notice how God deals with people. We begin to appreciate God's concern for the lost in this world, and God's commitment to justice and kindness.

Following Christ as Shepherd allows us to develop a certain confidence about life. The psalmist declares that the Lord has prepared a table "in the presence of my enemies". What this means, is that over time, and with increased exposure to understanding the heart of God and his love for us, we begin to experience a sense of having been set aside, of having been carefully and lovingly chosen by God. Jesus says in John's gospel, "My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

And so, within understanding this concept, understanding that we are part of Christ's fold by his own desire and action, we begin to understand better the Psalmist's words about "the darkest valley". God's presence with us at those moments of great stress and despair are not like an emergency room scene where an injured person is wheeled into the presence of the doctor for aid. The image, instead, is of a shepherd and a sheep that suddenly falls or becomes threatened. The shepherd turns to aid or defend. The shepherd does not come from somewhere else, the shepherd is right there to help the moment it happens. The psalm concludes with a vision of a life continuing in the Shepherds's care, continuing in His presence, and blessing. The Shepherd, once the sheep are in the fold, is careful not to lose them.

If there is a challenge for Christ's sheep inherent in these texts today, it is to be sure we are able to hear his voice, and know it above that of any other. The call of our Lord is "hidden" in a whole chorus of worldly and enemy voices which call to us. Other would-be shepherds seek to tempt us away from the Good Shepherd, the joy of his forgiveness and the security of his love. And when we are weak and confused we may fall victim to the enticements of other gods if we don't know the sound of our Shepherd's voice. And so above all other things of this world, above all other calls no matter how grand or noble they sound, we must be sure we know the voice of our Shepherd. The voice of our Shepherd that isn't just in our ears, it is in our hearts reminding us of how cherished we are in our Shepherds' heart; how secure we are in His care even in the valleys of the shadow; how confident we can be in our assurance of eternal life, and that no one can take us from our position in the very hand of our Shepherd. Learn these truths deeply from the voice of our Saviour and Shepherd. Spend more time listening to the voice of your heart than you do to the voices in your head that so often seek to diminish your life and hope.

For let us remember that the sheep in God's fold are to live in an unassailable confidence throughout all of life, through everything that could conceivably happen, that we cannot be overtaken by anything. .

...We Respond in Service...

Prayers of the People:

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of motherhood and for the many examples of faithful mothers in scripture, like Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, Mary, and Lois. We give thanks for mothers the world over. We celebrate all those who have nurtured and cared for us, remembering especially, birth mothers, adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers, aunts, grandmothers, teachers, neighbours, and all women who have mothered us.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of generations, thank you for the gift of faith kindled and rekindled in us through the years. And thank you for those that have taught us the faith in sincerity and love. Today, we give special thanks and praise for our church mothers, the women who, like Timothy's mother and grandmother, steadily and without much recognition teach a new generation of children about the love of Jesus. And we celebrate the matriarchs who build up with compassion and strong shoulders young women and girls, revealing a deep spiritual life and love woven into the fabric of our church family.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of compassion and joy, we know motherhood is a wide spectrum and our life together is big enough to stand in solidarity with all mothers. For the seen and unseen grief and struggles of women and mothers, we ache with you. For the seen and unseen joys of motherhood, we rejoice and celebrate with you.

May God bless all women on this special day; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, one God, creator of us all. Amen.

Hymn: 703 Happy the home when God is there

Benediction



When Mothers of Salem

<p>1 When mothers of Salem Their children brought to Jesus, The stern disciples drove them back And bade them depart; But Jesus saw them ere they fled, And sweetly smiled, and kindly said, "Suffer little children To come unto Me.</p>	<p>3 How kind was our Savior To bid these children welcome! But there are many thousands Who have never heard His name; The Bible they have never read; They know not that the Savior said, "Suffer little children To come unto Me."</p>
<p>2 "For I will receive them And fold them in my bosom; I'll be a shepherd to these lambs, O drive them not away; For, if their hearts to Me they give, They shall with Me in glory live: Suffer little children To come unto Me."</p>	<p>4 O soon may the heathen Of every tribe and nation Fulfill Thy blessed word, And cast their idols all away; O shine upon them from above, And show Thyself a God of love; Teach the little children To come unto Thee.</p>

Prayers - Wednesday Evening – May 4th

Psalm 100 - 'Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness, come before Him with joyful songs.'

Praise reports

Nancy back at Pathways and doing well.

Susan Myers and Ariaahna feeling better post COVID.

Bonnie for relief from pain and staples out from knee replacement.

Prayers

Birthdays for this week, Elizabeth Nyamuch Both is today, praying God's blessing on her. Rodger Fremlin May 8 and Marla Pritchard May 9 are coming up and we pray God's blessing on them too.

Blessings for all Moms and all who fill that role and thinking of our Mom's who are in Heaven, grateful we had their love. Thankful to remember them on this Mother's Day.

People of Ukraine, keep their hope alive, may they know the world is with them. And for Russians who do not support the war. Lord, please end the war.

Prayer for the missing plane with the two men, for their families. May they find peace no matter the final news.

For COVID patients, those recovering and those who are quite ill. We pray for quick healing and we pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus.

Pray for mental health week and all who suffer. Lord help us to listen and care, be with all who are suffering.

Lord we lift up those dealing with cancer, Mel's uncle Ronny, pray for his peace and comfort and that he knows God is with him. We pray for Charlotte, and for Peter's sister-in-law. We pray for Grayson, he has battled for two years now and we pray he beats this disease. We pray for a fellow diagnosed just this week and ask for Your Comfort and Peace in that family as they await news of a treatment plan and prognosis.

Lord may all battling cancer receive good care, comfort and peace.

We pray for Julie who had a heart attack and is recovering, thank you that she received the necessary medical attention.

We lift up Les Dool and pray for complete healing from shingles.

We pray for Jackie in his ongoing health struggles, for Emily Michaud, we pray for healing and recovery from her broken ankle.

Lord we lift up Shelby, and Mel's Goddaughter and ask that you be with them. We pray that Noela, is home from hospital soon.

For Josie in her ongoing rehab and pray for restoration to good health.

Lord, may all of these folks be healed and have comfort and know God's Presence.

Lord we lift up Donna Crossan and all of Sylvia Ross's family as they have their celebration of Sylvia's life this coming Saturday. May they be comforted knowing Sylvia is with you and no longer in pain.

We pray for Susan's brother and his family, that each one will hear Your voice and seek your guidance in their lives. May they all come to know Your love for them.

We pray for Carol and Adam Lord, please give Carol wisdom and perseverance in this relationship with her son. Help Adam to receive insight from You Lord.

We pray for Mel's friend Pam; Lord give her continued strength and courage as she deals with emptying her parent's home.

Lord we pray for a woman and son looking for a place to live, they are in great need Lord and we ask that you find them a home.