

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of Saint David
Early Morning Service April 08, 2012

We will all be changed by the Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ

1 Cor. 15:51-58



Changed by the Good Shepherd

Feed my sheep (John 21:17)

On this day the Bible texts show us the Lord strengthening His flock. Following the Good Shepherd, we are called to strengthen each other in the Lord, and to support and fortify the weak and the lost. There is one Shepherd, and we are his people.

Gathering: We gather in the name of the risen Lord.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

We gather as sisters and brothers of the resurrected one.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

We gather to share our faith and to worship God.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

We gather to proclaim the good news of Easter!

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Hymn: Alleluia, alleluia

Prayer of Confession: *The Lord has not abandoned us. In all life's experiences he guides us with rod and staff. He is our Good Shepherd. That is why we say: we give you thanks, Lord!*

We give you thanks, Lord!

For life and all gifts with which You have strengthened us

We give you thanks, Lord! *For the gift of Your Word*

We give you thanks, Lord! *For perseverance in faith*

We give you thanks, Lord! *For credible witnesses of Your Gospel*

We give you thanks, Lord! *For all things which we cannot count or fail to realize. We give you thanks, Lord!*

Thank You, Lord, for all gifts You have given us, so that we might not stop on the way or weaken in our spiritual struggle, You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Words for reflection: 1 Sam 2:1-10 Not by might does one prevail

Psalm 23 You are there with your rod and your staff

Eph 6:10-20 Be strong in the Lord

Jn 21:15-19 Feed my sheep

Commentary Those who prevail over suffering, need support from on high. That support comes through prayer. We read about the power of Hannah's prayer in the first chapter of the Book of Samuel. In the second chapter, we can find Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving. She realised that some things happen only with the help of God. It was through his will that Hannah and her husband became parents. This text is an example that strengthens one's faith in what would seem to be a hopeless situation. It is an example of victory.

The Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 guides his sheep even through the darkest places, comforting them with his presence. Those who place their trust in the Lord have no need to fear even the shadows of dissolution or disunity, as their shepherd will lead them into the green pastures of truth, to dwell together in the Lord's own house. In the Letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul urges us to *be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power* by putting on spiritual armour: truth, righteousness, proclaiming the Good News, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer and supplication.

The risen Lord urges Peter - and in his person each disciple - to discover in himself a love of Him who alone is the One True Shepherd. If you have such love, then *Feed my sheep!* In other words, feed them, protect them, care for them, strengthen them – because they are mine and belong to me! Be my good servant and tend to those who have loved me and who follow my voice. Teach them mutual love, cooperation, and boldness as they go along the twists and turns of life.

As a result of divine grace, the witness to Christ that has been confirmed in us obliges us to act jointly for the sake of unity. We have the ability and the knowledge to bear such witness! But are we willing to? The Good Shepherd, who by His life, teaching and conduct strengthens all who have put their trust in His grace and support, invites us to cooperate with Him unconditionally. Thus fortified, we will be able to help one another on the road to unity. So let us become strong in the Lord, that we may strengthen others in a joint testimony of love.

Prayer Father of all, you call us to be one flock in your Son, Jesus Christ. He is our Good Shepherd who invites us to lie down in green pastures, leads us beside still waters, and restores our souls. In following him, may we so care for others that all see in us the love of the one true Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Questions for reflection

1. How does the Good Shepherd inspire us to comfort, revive, and restore the confidence of those who are lost?
2. In what ways can Christians of various traditions strengthen each other in confessing and bearing witness to Jesus Christ?
3. For us today, what can be the meaning of St Paul's exhortation: "Be strong in the Lord.... put on the whole armour of God"?

Invitation *We gather at the table as invited guests. We come from many places, differing in age, differing in race, differing in orientation, politics and in many other ways.*

As we come together around the table we discover that our differences are not

something that need divide but that our differences often are a blessing.

The more difference we bring, the more fully we experience the presence of the sacred in our midst.

So come, children of God, just as you are. Wherever you are on this journey of life, you are welcome here, here in this place, here in this community, here at this table. Come, children of God, come and let us remember together.

Hymn: This is the feast of victory (vs. 1-3) 246

Prayer of Thanksgiving, concluding with...

Come, holy Spirit, come. Bless this bread and bless this fruit of the vine.

Bless all of us in our eating and drinking that our eyes might be open, that we might recognize the risen Christ in our midst, indeed in one another. *Come, holy Spirit, come.*

Hymn: This is the feast of victory (vs. 4-5) 246

Communion

Prayer following communion: God of resurrection of life and death and rebirth **Renew our hearts and minds**

God of promise of all beginnings and all endings **Renew our hearts and minds**

God of hope, growth and harvest **Renew our hearts and minds**

Hymn: He is Lord 252

Dismissal Blessing

We have come from darkness and despair

to hope and joy.

We have been transformed by new life.

Go forth to witness and to testify to the message of hope

we have received this day.

Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Hymn: He is Lord 252