

John 10:11-33; Psalm 23

Our Faith is about:

David says "The LORD is my shepherd . . ."

Jesus says, "I AM the Good Shepherd." "I lay down my life for my sheep. No one can pluck them out of my hands."

Such a PERSONAL thing! "MY" shepherd!

Our faith begins and ends with Jesus!

In the latest Christian Century is an article about being apprenticed to Jesus. We can tell whether our faith is on bedrock or "on stilts" if the emphasis is on Jesus! more than it is on secondary issues.

A valley and a presence:

In reality we are not always "up."

"I shall not want" does not mean we will never go through valleys. Scary places. Dangerous places.

But there is that promise: "I know that you will be with me! I know that you ARE with me!" "No one can pluck me out of your hand!"

A table and enemies:

When we are in the valley— when the pressure is on— the Lord has promised to feed us— to sustain us. (*Of course he feeds us when we're picnicking on the mountainside as well. But feed us He does! That's His job!*)

Our "enemies" will see this. It is not a "nah-nah-nah-nah-nah!" flaunting— eating in the presence of enemies. Rather it is being held, sustained—maintaining a love and Christ-like caring that the "enemies" can see!

Wherever you are on your Spiritual Journey the Presence is available to you.

God's table can sustain you.

Today's place of meeting Jesus in our Ashes to Fire is "Wounded Healers."

We meet Jesus when we share His table before our enemies...

we meet Jesus when we are at our strongest and share with others...

But perhaps we meet Jesus more than we can ever know when we share our faith with others when we are at our very lowest- our weakest.

I invite you to covenant again with Jesus at His table:

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Wherever you are on your Spiritual Journey:

If you believe God is seeking fellowship with you— and if you want to turn to Him, I invite you to come in faith to the Table of the Lord.

Draw near with faith and take this Sacrament to your comfort, and make your humble confession to God in humility before Him.

The Law Read and Confession Made

The Lord Jesus Christ has said to us: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’[c] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

Church, let us search our hearts. In silence let us ask God to draw us near to Himself so that we can come to his table with confidence.

(Reading No. 750 — A prayer in unison, from scripture:)

Unison: Search me, O God, and know my heart; Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me. Lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24)

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 51)

Pastor: Hear what our Lord has said: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." And he has also said, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Thank you. O God, for your forgiving us when we come humbly to you. We do not presume to come to this table, O God, trusting in our own righteousness, but in your great mercy and grace. Grant us to eat the Bread of heaven, and drink the blood shed for the remission of sins, that we may live in Christ, and Christ may live in us forever. Amen

The Words of Institution

On the night in which he was betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to You he broke it and gave it to his disciples and said, "Take eat: THIS IS MY BODY, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

After supper he took the cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you; THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink this, do it in remembrance of me: Amen

We praise you for the mystery of our salvation! We truly believe Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

Bless these emblems, O God, and make them to us the Body and Blood of your Son, spiritual food, and spiritual drink of new and unending life in Jesus Christ.

And now, together, we pray, as Jesus taught us: Our Father which art in heaven . . .

Now, humbly we receive the Gifts of God for the People of God