

Fourth Sunday of Easter, April 21

The Collect and Psalm will be read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

The First Lesson, Epistle and Gospel will be read from the Easy to Read Bible

The Collect: O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

First Lesson: Acts 4:5-12

5 The next day the Jewish rulers, the older Jewish leaders, and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander were there. Everyone from the high priest's family was there. 7 They made Peter and John stand before all the people. They asked them over and over, "How did you make this crippled man well? What power did you use? By whose authority did you do this?"

8 Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and said to them, "Rulers of the people and you older leaders, 9 are you questioning us today about what we did to help this crippled man? Are you asking us what made him well? 10 We want all of you and all the people of Israel to know that this man was made well by the power of Jesus Christ from Nazareth. You nailed Jesus to a cross, but God raised him from death. This man was crippled, but he is now well. He is able to stand here before you because of the power of Jesus! 11 Jesus is 'the stone that you builders thought was not important. But this stone has become the cornerstone.'

12 Jesus is the only one who can save people. His name is the only power in the world that has been given to save anyone. We must be saved through him!"

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Psalm: Psalm 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd; *

I shall not be in want.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures *

and leads me beside still waters.

3 He revives my soul *

and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.

4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I shall fear no evil; *

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5 You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; *

you have anointed my head with oil,

and my cup is running over.

6 Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, *

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Epistle: 1 John 3:16-24

16 This is how we know what real love is: Jesus gave his life for us. So we should give our lives for each other as brothers and sisters. 17 Suppose a believer who is rich enough to have all the necessities of life sees a fellow believer who is poor and does not have even basic needs. What if the rich believer does not help the poor one? Then it is clear that God's love is not in that person's heart. 18 My children, our love should not be only words and talk. No, our love must be real. We must show our love by the things we do.

19-20 That's how we know we belong to the way of truth. And when our hearts make us feel guilty, we can still have peace before God, because God is greater than our hearts. He knows everything.

21 My dear friends, if we don't feel that we are doing wrong, we can be without fear when we come to God. 22 And God gives us what we ask for. We receive it because we obey

God's commands and do what pleases him. 23 This is what God commands: that we believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and that we love each other as he commanded. 24 All who obey God's commands live in God. And God lives in them. How do we know that God lives in us? We know because of the Spirit he gave us.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people

Gospel: John 10:11-18

11 "I am the good shepherd, and the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. 12 The worker who is paid to keep the sheep is different from the shepherd. The paid worker does not own the sheep. So when he sees a wolf coming, he runs away and leaves the sheep alone. Then the wolf attacks the sheep and scatters them. 13 The man runs away because he is only a paid worker. He does not really care for the sheep.

14-15 "I am the shepherd who cares for the sheep. I know my sheep just as the Father knows me. And my sheep know me just as I know the Father. I give my life for these sheep. 16 I have other sheep too. They are not in this flock here. I must lead them also. They will listen to my voice. In the future there will be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The Father loves me because I give my life. I give my life so that I can get it back again. 18 No one takes my life away from me. I give my own life freely. I have the right to give my life, and I have the right to get it back again. This is what the Father told me."

The Gospel of the Lord

On April 22 we celebrate the lives of John Muir, Naturalist and Writer, and Hudson Stuck, Priest and Environmentalist.. Read from *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*.

Born in Scotland in 1838, John Muir immigrated to the United States in 1849, settling in Wisconsin. Muir sought the spiritual freedom of the natural world. As a college student, Muir studied botany, of which he later said, "This fine lesson charmed me and sent me flying to the woods and meadows with wild enthusiasm."

In 1868, Muir arrived in Yosemite Valley, California, which he called “the grandest of all the special temples of nature.” During a hiking trip through the Sierras, Muir developed theories about the development and ecosystem of the areas. Some years later, Muir took up the cause of preservation, eventually co-founding the Sierra Club, an association of environmental preservationists.

Muir, an ardent believer in the national parks as “places of rest, inspiration, and prayers,” adamantly opposed the free exploitation of natural resources for commercial use. This position put him at odds with conservationists who saw natural forests as sources of timber and who wanted to conserve them for that reason.

Muir was influential in convincing President Theodore Roosevelt that federal management and control were necessary to insure the preservation of the national forests. Today, he is revered as an inspiration for preservationists and his life’s work stands as a powerful testament to the majesty and beauty of God’s creation.

Hudson Stuck was an Episcopal priest and explorer. Born in England in 1863, he came to the United States in 1885. He graduated from The University of the South in 1892. From 1894 to 1904, Stuck was Dean of the Episcopal Cathedral in Dallas, Texas. In 1905 he moved to Fort Yukon, Alaska, where he spent the rest of his life, serving as archdeacon of the Diocese of Alaska.

With a group of fellow explorers, Stuck was the first to completely ascend Denali (Mt. McKinley). He later wrote of the experience as a “privileged communion” to be received in awe and wonder. Upon reaching the pinnacle of Denali, Stuck led the climbers in prayer and thanksgiving. Archdeacon Stuck died in 1920.

Let us pray: Blessed Creator of the earth and all that inhabits it: We thank you for your prophets John Muir and Hudson Stuck, who rejoiced in your beauty made known in the natural world; and we pray that, inspired by their love of your creation, we may be wise and faithful stewards of the world you have created, that generations to come may also lie down to rest among the pines and rise refreshed for their work; in the Name of the one through

whom you make all things new, Jesus Christ our Savior, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**