

SAINT THOMAS CHURCH

Fifth Avenue · New York City

Sunday, April 30, 2023

The Fourth Sunday of Easter (Good Shepherd Sunday)

Festal Eucharist

11 a.m.

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A Sermon by

The Rt. Rev. Rose Hudson-Wilkins, Bishop of Dover, Canterbury, England, UK

on

Acts 2:42-47; 1 Peter 2:19-25; John 10:

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A Sermon for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, 2023

So may the words of my mouth, the thoughts. The meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to God, who is our strength and Our Redeemer. Amen.

It is a delight and a joy to be here with you for the first time this morning. The words from Acts of the Apostles, they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers. I want us to think about those words this morning, the disciples devoted themselves to the apostles teaching to face Fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. I would like to ask us to reflect on what is it that you and I are devoted to and with this within the sense of being devoted, I am thinking of what is it that we give the most attention to in our life. Of patterning. Jesus Christ, it seems to me that you and I as followers of Christ that we need to become more focused on that, which we need to be devoted to, There are lots of distractions, lots of distractions. And sometimes we find ourselves. If we're not careful caught up in the distractions, the things which are not core the things, which is not the apostles teaching, and actually, the apostles teaching will be those that they heard and saw of there, Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So there is a real challenge for you and I every time we become caught up with something that is not the core to ask ourselves or actually just to check in what is this about?

Is this about Jesus's teaching? Fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayers. We're told in the Acts of the Apostles that amongst the Believers that they shared things in common, they were together and they had all things in common. Which leaves me to ask. Why is it that from time to time? We Seek to find the things that we don't hold in common to argue and fight and fuss about instead of staying focused on that. Which we have in common So what is that common message? As a child's growing up and no doubt your children.

In Sunday school we would have learnt that most powerful of Bible verses: John 3:16. For God for God so loved the world. Not for God so loved New Yorkers. He does. Not for God so loved the British and I'm sure he does and the Jamaican stew. But for God, so loved the world and within that love, we open our arms and we embrace the world and so that has to be part of our Focus if God cared enough for the world, then might we to care for God's world as God's children might sweetu. Follow in the footsteps of Jesus to care for hispeople, all his people and all the world. And what would that look like if we cared for all the world? I suspect that as in that first reading, we are told that they shared what they had, they sold their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all as any had need. You see this world that we live in Daily. On our television screens, we see images of suffering. Images of people in need and perhaps. We don't need to look on the television screens. Perhaps, we just need to open her eyes and look around us. And then we need to ask or perhaps to say, Lord here I am send me. Because we are God's hands and feet and voices. To respond to God's people, wherever they are day by day. As they spent much time together

in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous Hearts, glad and generous hearts, in my Diocese of Canterbury back in the UK.

I have shared with you four priorities. It is firstly the priority of Prayer. And that is important. Because as God's children, we need to keep in tune and stay connected with God. And the prayer becomes our oxygen. We don't think that we are breathing, we don't think about it. We simply breathe. And we sometime take that for granted you and I must stay so connected to God, so that it becomes our second nature. In terms of our prayer and our fellowship. My second priority is that of the scriptures. The necessity for us to keep reading God's word, keep learning them so that we can draw on them.

Not to beat others around the head but asked of what we read? What did this mean to those? Who heard it first? What message? Might it be saying to me? Sometimes we get caught up, we get caught up in pointing the fingers, you know, in Our Gospel reading we heard our Lord saying, I am the gate. If we're not careful, we can get caught up in being the kind of gate where we lock others out, instead of opening the gate, so that all may come in. So what does it? I mean, for us, when we hear the scripture, what is it saying to us for today? And perhaps for tomorrow? And the days and weeks months and years to come that we can draw on quiet, you sung for us? So beautifully, the 23rd. Psalm, the Lord is my shepherd when I was a little girl, when we were playing outside in, In the yard, if we played too loudly, one of my aunts would call us in, you're making too much noise, but that's what little children are supposed to do, aren't they? But we couldn't answer back then, so she would call us in and she would say you're making far too much noise, outside come inside and read the Bible and she would get this huge Bible out and she would open it to the Psalms and get us. Reading the Psalms. And at the time as a little girl, I felt I really want to be outside playing not reading the scriptures but I tell you what I love it now I perhaps didn't appreciate it then but those psalms that I used to read for her, they have become something that I draw on.

Psalm 27, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom Shall I Fear? Or Psalm 24, the Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof the world and they that dwell therein and of course, Psalm 23 so choir. I hope that it is not just a song that you have sung and that you will forget about it but that you will retain it and remember it and draw on the Scriptures, so prayer. The scriptures, my third priority is, generosity the need for us, not only to speak about generosity, but to live generosity, because we're patterning Jesus, and Jesus, patterned that generous living with, who we are with our gifts, our money, our time, our Energies, And then my fourth priority is that of evangelism and that simply means good news. How do we tell the good news of Jesus Christ? You know when you happen to chance upon a new store or a new restaurant you are quick to get your phones out and tell a friend or a neighbor guess what? Go and visit this, it is terrific. How many of you when you leave here today will get your phones out and say to your friends or family member. Guess what what will you tell them about what you have experienced today? And will you say to them? I think you ought to come with me next time or I think you ought to go there. Let us learn to share good news, but if we're going to share it, then my brothers and sisters, let us live it. Because if we do not live it and we are simply talking about it, then people will say, I can't hear what you're saying, because of what I see you doing. My folks used to say to us as children action speaks louder than words. So, let us indeed be the gates. But let us be the kind of gate that is open to including all in the kind of Gator, that brings joy and comfort. Let us be Keen in focusing on that which is core.

Let's leave the other fringes stuff that isn't necessary and Let's Stay Together in the breaking of bread. In the fellowship and in our prayers together. Let us commit to living generous lives, because you, and I, we are the body of Christ. We Are Witnesses. Let us be the witness in our daily lives. Not just, in a Sunday, in this little gap of time, but daily Amen.