

Fourth Sunday of Easter Sunday, April 22, 2018

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 read from the Lexham English Bible

And it happened that on the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes came together in Jerusalem, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all those who were from the high priest's family. And they made them stand in their midst and began to ask, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a sick man—by what means this man was healed— let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man stands before you healthy! This one is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, that has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that is given among people by which we must be saved."

The Word of the Lord

Psalm 23 read from The Episcopal Church Book of Common Prayer

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 read from the Message Bible

This is how we've come to understand and experience love: Christ sacrificed his life for us. This is why we ought to live sacrificially for our fellow believers, and not just be out for ourselves. If you see some brother or sister in need and have the means to do something about it but turn a cold shoulder and do nothing, what happens to God's love? It disappears. And you made it disappear.

My dear children, let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality. It's also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism, even when there is something to it. For God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves.

And friends, once that's taken care of and we're no longer accusing or condemning ourselves, we're bold and free before God! We're able to stretch our hands out and receive what we asked for because we're doing what he said, doing what pleases him. Again, this is God's command: to believe in his personally named Son, Jesus Christ. He told us to love each other, in line with the original command. As we keep his commands, we live deeply and surely in him, and he lives in us. And this is how we experience his deep and abiding presence in us: by the Spirit he gave us.

The Word of the Lord

Gospel: John 10:11-18 read from the Modern English Version Bible

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. But he who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and runs away. So the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because he is a hired hand and does not care about the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd. I know My sheep and am known by My own. Even as the Father knows Me, so I know the Father. And I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep who are not of this fold. I must also bring them, and they will hear My voice. There will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take

it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I received this command from My Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Closing Prayer: On April 27th we remember Christitna Rossetti, poet

Christina Georgina Rossetti was an English poet who wrote a variety of romantic, devotional, and children's poems. She is best known for her long poem *Goblin Market*, her love poem "Remember", and for the words of what became the popular Christmas carol "In The Bleak Midwinter".

Rossetti was born in London and educated at home by her mother. Her father, Gabriele Rossetti, was an Italian poet and a political asylum seeker from Naples. Her mother, Frances Polidori, was the sister of Lord Byron's friend and physician, John William Polidori, author of *The Vampyre*.

When she was 14, Rossetti suffered a nervous breakdown, which was followed by bouts of depression and related illness. During this period she, her mother, and her sister became seriously interested in the Anglo-Catholic movement of the Church of England. This religious devotion played a major role in Rossetti's personal life. She was a volunteer worker from 1859 to 1870 at the St. Mary Magdalene "house of charity" in Highgate, a refuge for former prostitutes.

Rossetti began writing at age 7, but she was 18 when her first published poem appeared in the Athenaeum magazine. However her most famous collection, *Goblin Market and Other Poems*, appeared in 1862, when she was 31. The collection garnered much critical praise.

Her Christmas poem "In the Bleak Midwinter" found in the 1982 Hymnal #112 became widely known after her death when set as a Christmas carol first by Gustav Holst, and then by Harold Darke: in this setting it was judged in 1998 the best carol in a poll of some of the world's leading choirmasters and choral experts. Her poem "Love Came Down at Christmas" written in 1885; found in the 1982 Hymnal #84 has also been widely arranged as a carol.

Rossetti continued to write and publish for the rest of her life although she focused primarily on devotional writing and children's poetry. In 1893 she developed cancer, and died the following year on December 29th 1894.

Let us pray: O God, whom heaven cannot hold, you inspired Christina Rossetti to express the mystery of the Incarnation through her poems: Help us to follow her example in giving our hearts to Christ, who is love; and who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. **Amen.**