Psalm 23
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

As we move through this season of Eastertide, we continue to "See What Love Can Do" just as the early disciples began to see with new eyes after the Resurrection. In today’s reading from the Book of Acts, we learn that they were drawing strength and encouragement from one another through teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers. They were helping one another to "see" a new way forward.

As a result of the new life in their community, awe came upon everyone, Scripture tells us, because many signs and wonders became apparent.

What signs and wonders are you seeing these days?

One of my favorite examples, shared with me by one of our members, comes to us from the United Kingdom. It’s the story of Captain Tom Moore, an army veteran who joined the army at the start of World War II. Now this war hero finds himself in the midst of a new crisis as the coronavirus ravaged Britain. Capitan Moore celebrated his 100th birthday on Thursday. To mark the day, he wanted to raise some money to support the National Health Service in the UK by walking 100 times around his garden. He thought he might raise £1,000. Then the story went viral. The whole country was so inspired by him that he has already raised over £31 million, approx. $39 million. He has also received 140,000 birthday cards, commendations from the Queen and the Prime Minister, and a fly-over by the Royal Air Force.

Captain Tom Moore captured the hearts of his country, again in his long-life witnessing hope and inspiration in a dark time. Signs and wonders, indeed, as awe came upon them all.

While in the midst of their own dark days, the early disciples were turning the corner to face into the present moment of their lives with conviction and determination to carry on. They drew strength from one another. And as a result, God’s spirit opened them to far more than they ever could have thought or imagined. Many wonders and signs were being done by them, the Scripture tells us. These ordinary folks, whom Jesus had called and taught, began living into the model of life he had set for them. Lives of self-giving and service. Selling their possessions. Holding all things in common. Giving generously to any in need. And awe came upon everyone, it says.

We humans are capable of awesome things when the love of God breaks open our hearts. And in the midst of the fear and grief of this pandemic, we are seeing awesome things happen that just weeks ago we would have thought to be impossible.

What are you seeing? How about the LA Unified School District which has served almost 10 million meals since March 18th, not just to the families of their own students who lost breakfast and lunch programs when the schools closed, but to anyone in need.

How about the hundreds of unhoused people across the county who have moved into shelters and hotels, who otherwise would have no place to “shelter in place” and no access to health care?

It shouldn’t have taken a pandemic to make all this happen, and these are only temporary solutions. But the point is, we can do just about anything we put our hearts and minds to. We can care for one another, especially those in greatest need. We can re-learn old lessons about living simply and sharing, taking care that no one is left out or left behind. We will “See What Love Can Do!” in ways big and small and we will be filled with awe.

And we will be filled with gratitude. For all these things come from God. Our God who cares for each and every one. The housed and the unhoused. The overfed and the hungry. The hopeless and the hope-deprived. Those who are bored
and lonely and those whose cramped quarters must now accommodate working parents if they’re fortunate enough to still have work and kids schooling at home for the time-being.

Our God loves and cares for each and every one. Our God is our good shepherd who will go to extremes to see that not one is ever lost. Our God who leads us into green pastures for rest and restores our souls by the flowing waters. Our God who never abandons us in the valleys of the shadows of death, but walks with us, comforting us, calming our fears, soothing us with the oil of healing.

On Good Shepherd Sunday, we affirm our conviction that the shepherd of the 23rd Psalm has become flesh in Christ Jesus, who laid down his life for his flock and has now been raised from the dead. He is present with us now in death’s shadow and darkness and in life’s radiant joy and light. He is present with us in the sacrament we share. We belong to him and he will cherish us as his own, forever and ever.

We dwell in the house of the Lord—today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, forever. Goodness and mercy are the hallmarks of our days. Let us become part of the signs and wonders manifest all around us, that the world might indeed “See What Love Can Do.”

Christ is Risen! HE IS RISEN INDEED!

Alleluia. Amen.

Commemorating