

## **Easter 4 sermon – April 21, 2024**

Gibson Island has many beautiful and intriguing structures. As far as I know, no house is the same as another house. And no plot of land is the same, as far as I can tell from driving around the Island. But your homes are not the only structures that are intriguing. Indeed, one of the most intriguing structures in this community is the one in which we are right now. This chapel.

As we recognize the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St. Christopher's, we are discovering lots of photos, drawings, and paintings of this special place. There is something that draws the eye to this property, and it's not just the physical elements like the roof or the bell or the deck or the altar. There is something more going on. It's the people. It is you. It is the string of baptisms, marriages and burials, as well as the weekly services and special services, such as Blessing of the Animals.

When you see a painting or photo of this place, the first thing that comes to your mind is not what kind of shingles were used in the construction. No, the first thing that comes to mind are the people who observed special occasions on this property. That would be most if not all of you, plus those who simply drive by or walk by. One's attention is drawn to these structures, and in turn to remembrances of events, neighbors, family members, visitors.

If you were to ask a visitor "What do you remember when you first visited friends or family on Gibson Island?" the visitor might well cite the chapel, with its parish hall and deck and, yes, the Memorial Garden. And the view from the back of the chapel. Like the front of the chapel, the view from the back never gets old. It's one of the draws of this Island community.

We are not a cathedral structure-wise. But we are a cathedral spirit-wise. The word "cathedral" refers to the "seat, the location, of the bishop." Clearly, we here are not a cathedral in this sense. But we are a home to a spirit-filled community. This is our "seat." This where we gather for spirit-filled events. These events include the Sunday service, other services throughout the year, baptisms, marriages, burials, confessions, absolutions, fresh starts, prayers of all sorts, and many, many silent moments.

It's a special place in other words. Not just the architecture, not just the property, not just the view, not just special events. It's all of these things, which in their own way remind us of a loving God, who appeared as a first century carpenter and as an ever-present forgiving and challenging Spirit. It is where we gather to say thank you, to ask for forgiveness, and to accept forgiveness, to face challenges, make promises, remind self and others of the availability of God's love, especially in the toughest of situations.

St. Christopher's is adjacent to the golf course. It's not uncommon for golf balls to appear in the parking lot or elsewhere on the grounds. Sometimes we keep them as souvenirs, but most of the time we toss them back to where they belong and where someone had hoped they would land.

If I were a golf ball and was flying toward the first hole, and then caught sight of this beautiful little chapel, I would be tempted to make a sharp right hand turn, either in the air or on the ground, and end up in the parking lot, maybe as far as the Memorial Garden. It happens!

When one visits the Island for the first time and makes his or her way to the office, he or she will pass the church and catch a glimpse. And the visitor will be struck by the simple beauty of this place. And perhaps the person will make another visit and spend some time here. Either at a Sunday service, or during the week when they are on the property. And the peace they find in the open building is not an accident. And what they discover is that the peace of the chapel is reflected in the whole property.

This phenomenon, this draw, is a symbol of the draw of Jesus. He is a really interesting, even compelling figure. And the more we get to know him, either in private prayer or Sunday service or study group or social event, the more we want to know.

Now, not everyone who is intrigued by Jesus, will follow him. Indeed there are times when it appears that Jesus doesn't listen. Why didn't you, Lord, intervene when I needed you? Why did you allow this to happen? I've been faithful to you, and this is what I get? Massive disappointment? Give me a break, Lord.

Sound familiar? Sure it does. But the disappointment doesn't last, does it. Thanks to a forgiving and loving God, we are welcomed back to a positive relationship with the Lord. We know where we belong, and we know where we will find strength in the short run and genuine happiness over the long haul.

And here we are. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

**Service of Holy Communion**  
**Fourth Sunday of Easter – April 21, 2024**

**Hymn 497 – How bright appears the Morning Star**

How bright appears the Morning Star, with mercy beaming from afar;  
the host of heaven rejoices; O righteous Branch, O Jesse's Rod!  
Thou Son of Man and Son of God! We, too, will lift our voices:  
Jesus, Jesus! Holy, holy, yet most lowly, draw thou near us;  
Great Emmanuel, come and hear us.

Though circled by the hosts on high, he deigned to cast a pitying eye  
upon his helpless creature; the whole creation's Head and Lord,  
by highest seraphim adored, assumed our very nature;  
Jesus, grant us, through thy merit, to inherit thy salvation;  
Hear, O hear our supplication.

Rejoice, ye heavens; thou earth reply; with praise, ye sinners fill the sky,  
for this his Incarnation. Incarnate God, put forth thy power,  
ride on, ride on, great Conqueror, till all know salvation.  
Amen, amen! Alleluia, alleluia! Praise be given  
evermore more, by earth and heaven.

**Page 355**

Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
*And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever. Amen.*

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no  
secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy  
Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name;  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Page 356 - Song of Praise - said**

*Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.*  
*Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father,*  
*we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.*  
*Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God,*  
*you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;*

*you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.  
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.*

The Lord be with you.  
And also with you.  
Let us pray.

### **Collect for Fourth Sunday of Easter**

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 Reading – Acts 4:5-12**

### **Psalm 23**

### **Second Reading – I John 3:16-24**

### **Hymn 708 – Savior, like a shepherd lead us**

Savior, like a shepherd lead us; much we need thy tender care;  
in thy pleasant pastures feed us; for our use thy folds prepare.  
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus! Thou has bought us, thine we are.

Early let us seek thy favor, early let us learn thy will;  
do thou, Lord, our only Savior, with thy love our bosoms fill.  
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus! Thou hast loved us: love us still.

### **Gospel – John 10:11-18**

### **Sermon**

The Rev. Charles Rowins

## Nicene Creed – page 358

*We believe in one God,  
the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is seen and unseen.*

*We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father.*

*Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.*

*On the third day he rose again In accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.  
With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

## **Prayers of the People Form IV – page 388**

Let us pray for the Church and for the world.

Grant, Almighty God, that all who confess your Name may be united in your truth, live together in your love, and reveal your glory in the world.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Guide the people of this land, and of all the nations, in the ways of justice and peace; that we may honor one another and serve the common good.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Give us all a reverence for the earth as your own creation, that we may use its resources rightly in the service of others and to your honor and glory.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours, and grant that we may serve Christ in them, and love one another as he loves us.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

Comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit; give them courage and hope in their troubles, and bring them the joy of your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled; and we pray that we may share with all your saints in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, in your mercy. *Hear our prayer.*

## **Confession and Absolution – page 360**

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.*

*We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. Amen.

### **The Peace – page 360**

The Peace of the Lord be always with you.  
*And also with you.*

### **Announcements and Preparation of the Table**

#### **Eucharistic Prayer – page 361**

The Lord be with you.  
*And also with you.*  
Lift up your hearts.  
*We lift them to the Lord.*

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
*It is right to give him thanks and praise.*

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. Therefore we praise, you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.*



Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself, in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, 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 of wine; 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 it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:  
*Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.*

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. *Amen.*

## **Lord's Prayer**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

## **Breaking of the Bread**

Alleluia. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.  
*Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.*

The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

## **Communion**

### **Post Communion Prayer – BCP page 365**

*Eternal God, heavenly Father, **you** have graciously accepted us  
as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with  
spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world  
in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness  
and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### **Hymn 344 – Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing**

Lord, dismiss us with thy blessing; fill our hearts with joy and peace;  
let us each, thy love possessing, triumph in redeeming grace:  
O refresh us, O refresh us, traveling through this wilderness.

Thanks we give and adoration for thy gospel's joyful sound:  
may the fruits of thy salvation in our hearts and lives abound:  
ever faithful, ever faithful to thy truth may we be found;

So that when thy love shall call us, Savior, from the world away,  
fear of death shall not appall us, glad thy summons to obey.  
May we ever, may we ever reign with thee in endless day.

### **Dismissal**

Alleluia! Alleluia! Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
*Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.*

## Lessons for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – April 21, 2024

**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 Reading: Acts 4:5-12**

The rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. When they had made the prisoner stand in their midst, they inquired, "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 questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this may have been healed, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

### **Psalm 23**

The Lord is my shepherd;

*I shall not be in want.*

He makes me lie down in green pastures

*and leads me beside still waters.*

He revives my soul

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

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.*

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.*

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.*

## **Second Reading: I John 3:16-24**

We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help? Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts and he knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God; and we receive from him whatever we ask, because we obey his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit that he has given us.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

## **Gospel: John 10:11-18**

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away – and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

The Gospel of the Lord. *Praise be you, O Christ.*