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**Easter 4 – Good Shepherd Sunday – Y is for YIELD
Psalm 23, John 10:11-18, 1 John 3:16-24, Acts 4:5-10**

**25 April 2021
Salem, Bridgeport**

“Y Is for Yield.”

Today we finish up our series on “Y PRAY?”

We’ve looked at the P for Pause, the R for Rejoice, the A for Ask, and today we look at the Y for Yield –

because that’s exactly what our lessons today are about.

Psalm 23 tells us why we should yield to God –

because God is our good shepherd, God makes us lie down in green pastures, God leads us beside still waters, God restores our souls, God protects us from danger, God gives us victory, and God prepares for us a feast!

In John, Jesus takes that to an even deeper level when he says that He is the Good Shepherd who loves us so much he lays down his life for us sheep!

In First John, we are reminded how Jesus laid down his life for us

and we, in turn, are commanded to lay down our lives for others.

We are to yield not just our treasure, our time, our talent, not only our hopes and dreams, but our very lives.

And in Acts, Peter models for us what it means to yield to God

no matter what the risk, no matter what the price, no matter what the cost.

Today I’d like to talk about three reasons to yield and 3 rules for yielding.

Why should we you yield to God?

First, because God knows you!

God made you! God knows everything about you!

God know how many hairs are on your head,

how many times your heart will beat, and how many breaths you will take in your life.

God knows everything you think, everything you feel, every desire of your heart.

Second, God loves you!

You are God’s work of art, God’s beloved child, the apple of God’s eye!

If you have any doubts reread Psalm 23 or reflect on all that Jesus went through in order to model for you

how the secret to abundant life is trusting God no matter what!

Third, God desires your love!

God wants to be more than an acquaintance, more than a friend, more than your best friend.

Think of the most intimate relationship you've ever had –

the person you loved and trusted the most, the person who loved and trusted you the most,
the person you couldn't wait to see, the one you gazed at adoringly and hung on their every
word,

the one you loved talking with, the one whose advice you sought,

the one you loved working on projects with,

the one you could spend hours with even if the two of you didn't say a word.

That's the kind of relationship God wants with you!

God wants to be the most important thing,

the most important relationship,

the most important "person" in your life.

So the three reasons for yielding to God are that

God knows you, God loves you, and God desires your love.

And the three rules of the road for yielding have to do with relationships.

First, it's about our relationship with God.

God doesn't want to be the cashier in the gas station

who sells us a **map** and whom we never see again.

God doesn't want to plan our trip, print out the directions, and hand them to us

so we can go off and leave God behind.

God doesn't want to be like an old inferior map app that knows the roads

but doesn't take into account real time events like traffic jams, & accidents, & road closures.

God wants to go along with us on the journey and be our traveling companion.

Our journey through this life is not so much like a car trip as it is a treasure hunt.

It's like God plants a clue and then God and I set off to find it.

When I do, I try to figure out what it means and where it points,

and if I can't figure it out on my own then God helps me and we go on to the next clue.

Going back to what we said in the beginning.

God knows us and knows what it is that will bring us the most joy in life

and how best to get to that joy.

God loves us and wants to help us figure out

what that highest purpose, that ultimate goal, that most captivating dream is.

And God wants to make sure we get there.

And to do that we have to keep listening to God's directions.

It's not enough to type our destination into our GPS app, look at the plan,

and then turn the app off.

We can't set out in a particular direction and then stop listening to the directions, because things may change.

There might be an accident ahead, or slippery road conditions, or road construction. We might have to change our route, or backtrack a bit, or even start over.

But when we yield to God,

we are yielding to the One who knows us and everyone else in our lives, we're yielding to the One who as a spiritual being exists outside the realm of matter and time and who knows the past, the present, and the future; we're yielding to the One who sees not only our small puzzle piece, but how ours fits together with everyone else's puzzle piece.

It's a day-by-day, inch by inch, step by step journey with the One who knows us and loves us and desires our love.

Second, it's also about our relationships with others.

On our journey we must do two things:

we must obey the rules of the road and we must pay attention to signs.

If we drive too fast in a car we can end up in an accident, and so we obey the speed limit so that we get to where we're going safely and we don't injure anyone else along the way.

It's important to note that the Christian journey is a counter cultural one.

Our culture tells us that the end justifies the means.

Our faith, on the other hand, teaches that the way we live is a path that leads to its own direction.

If my destination is to accumulate wealth so I can be a great philanthropist,

I must get there by practicing generosity,

rather than selfishly hoarding wealth until I reach a particular goal.

If my destination is peace, I must get there by following the way of peace.

I cannot get there by violence.

To be the Prince of Peace Jesus had to walk the way of peace,

telling Peter to put away his sword, & allowing himself to be tortured and crucified.

So we must follow the rules of the road.

Not only must we yield to God, we must yield to other people when God commands.

Like Jesus yielded to the soldiers, & to Caiaphas and Pilate, & to the crowds when God asked him to, we, too must yield.

When God asks us to, we must yield our pride and our arrogance.

We must yield our need to be right and make others wrong.

We must yield our selfishness and greed and self-serving interests.

We must yield our rights and privileges and power.

We must follow the rules of the road.

And we must also be alert to signs.

As we said earlier when we set out on this treasure hunt journey,

we need to clarify our destination, we need to look for clues,

and we need to decipher them.

Sometimes God may speak directly to us, but often God will speak through other people.

**And there are 2 groups we need to pay attention to:
our traveling companions and the locals.**

Our traveling companions are other people of faith –

people in our congregation, people in any larger community of faith –

like a council of churches, or the interdenominational ministerial alliance,

or an ecumenical or interfaith group,

or family members or friends with whom we can talk about all things spiritual.

Talking with those in our own faith community is crucial

because it's how we determine God's will for our group.

Jesus only leads us in one direction,

so if 8 of us think we should go north and 2 think we should go south,

then we need to listen carefully to those 2 to make sure which way Jesus is calling us.

And the other people we need to listen to are the locals –

the people who may or may not be people of faith,

but through whom God may be speaking to us.

If we are traveling in a foreign land, the way we will get the most out of the journey

is by getting to know the people who live there.

They are the ones who not only can make our way easier & safer,

they're the ones who make the journey richer.

We need to pay attention to the people outside of our traveling group,

people who don't look like us, who don't sound like us, who don't live like us,

because those are the people who have the clues we need to get to the end of our journey.

We need to yield to God,

we need to yield to the traveling companions in our faith groups,

and we need to yield to the people around us who are most different from us.

Yielding is one of the hardest things we human beings can do,

but it's the way of the cross, it's the way of love, it's the way to abundant life.

Yielding up our treasure and time and talent,

our comfort and safety, our power and privilege, our hopes and dreams, our loves and lives,
is risky, scary, and downright terrifying.

But when we remember that God knows us and lives us and desires our love,
when we live in that knowledge,
when we go deep into that relationship,

we will find not only the courage to yield, but to take that leap into the future.

And when we do that, we will find ourselves caught in the safe embrace
of the One who loves us more than anyone in all the world.

May you yield to God, and in that yielding find joy and peace and love –
and a life that is far more abundant than anything you ever imagined,
for Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Amen!