

+ ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICE | MAY 3, 2020 | 10:00 AM +

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

“O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good and his steadfast love endures forever.”

I welcome all of you to worship this morning on this the fourth Sunday of Easter, GOOD SHEPHERD Sunday.

Your portion of the service is marked as “Congregation”. For the Confession, Introit, Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer, I will lead you by speaking the words with you.

PRELUDE: “Thank You, Jesus”

+ CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION +

INVOCATION

Pastor In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation **Amen.**

EXHORTATION

Pastor If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Congregation **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

(Silence for reflection on God’s Word and for self-examination.)

CONFESSION OF SINS

Pastor Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

Congregation **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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 justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

ABSOLUTION

Pastor Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Congregation **Amen.**

+ SERVICE OF THE WORD +

INTROIT

Psalm 95:1–3, 6–7a; antiphon: John 10:14, 15b

Pastor

I am the good shepherd.

I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;

let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

For the LORD is a great God,

and a great King above all gods.

Oh come, let us worship and bow down;

let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!

For he is our God,

and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

Congregation **Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Pastor I am the good shepherd.
 I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

KYRIE

Pastor In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Congregation **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

Congregation **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

Congregation **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

Congregation **Lord, have mercy.**

Pastor Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Congregation **Amen.**

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

Pastor The Lord be with you.

Congregation **And also with you.**

Pastor Let us pray.

Almighty God, merciful Father, since You have wakened from death the Shepherd of Your sheep, grant us Your Holy Spirit that when we hear the voice of our Shepherd we may know Him who calls us each by name and follow where He leads; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Congregation **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Acts 2:42–47

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Pastor This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation **Thanks be to God.**

EPISTLE

¹⁹This is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. ²⁰For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. ²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Pastor This is the Word of the Lord.

Congregation **Thanks be to God.**

HOLY GOSPEL

John 10:1–10

Pastor The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.
Congregation **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹[Jesus said:] “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber. ²But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. ⁵A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

Pastor This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Congregation **Praise to You, O Christ.**

APOSTLES' CREED (spoken in unison)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life † everlasting. Amen.

SONG: “23rd Psalm”

SERMON: “The Good Shepherd”

The image of God’s people as sheep is common in the Bible. It’s not completely complementary either. From all accounts, sheep are helpless animals of limited intelligence. They are timid. They can be startled by the slightest sound. But at other times they are so stubborn that nothing will move them.

Pastor John MacArthur observes, “**Sheep are the most helpless, defenseless, straying, and dirty of animals. They require constant oversight, leading, rescue, and cleaning or they will die.**”

The Bible says we all are like sheep. I’ll leave it up to you to react to those words.

Philip Keller in his book on the 23RD Psalm, says that in order for sheep to lie down, four things are required:

1. Sheep must be free from all fear. Sheep are very easily frightened. When one startled sheep runs in fright, all of the others will follow behind it in blind fear, not waiting to see what frightened them. But nothing quiets a flock like seeing their shepherd in the field with them.

2. Sheep will not lie down unless there is harmony in the flock. When there is tension between rivals, the sheep can't lie down and rest. They must always stand up and be ready to fight. But when the shepherd is around, they forget their rivalries and stop fighting.

3. Sheep will not lie down unless they are content. If flies or fleas are bothering them they will not lie down. The shepherd must provide them with relief.

4. Sheep will not lie down unless they are full. A hungry sheep is always on its feet, searching for another mouthful of food, trying to satisfy its gnawing hunger. It is the shepherd who leads them to green pastures and still waters.

The Bible says we are all like sheep. In spite of the negative connotations, however, the God who identifies us as "sheep" also identifies himself as the "shepherd."

Calling us "sheep" might not feel like a great complement; but knowing that the "Good Shepherd" cares for us does.

A good shepherd will lead his sheep to water. He will lead them to good pastures. He will protect them. He will watch out for them. He will guard them. He will tend to their wounds. He will care for them. He will bring back the strays. He will seek out the lost.

At the time of Jesus, a shepherd carried a rod and a six-foot staff. A shepherd sometimes used his rod on a sheep who was wandering and refusing to follow the shepherd's voice. It was a discipline that could - for a time - hurt the sheep, but was done out of love to protect it.

Other times instead of the rod a shepherd would gently nudge the stray to bring it back into the fold. Both the rod and the staff are protection for the sheep.

The life of a shepherd was not an easy one, but it was vital for the life of the sheep. Without shepherds the sheep would have little hope for survival. They would wander aimlessly searching for water but likely not find it. They would be harassed and killed by wild beasts. Sheep need a shepherd.

In Jesus Christ, we have a Good Shepherd who does all these things and more! He calms our fears. He comforts us. He gives us a peace that passes understanding. He feeds us with life-giving spiritual food: The Word of God. He even gave His life for the sheep.

Are you a sheep? Are you one of God's little Lambs? A sheep is defined as a follower. They adhere to the teachings of the one they follow. As followers of the Good Shepherd they are dedicated to learning and accepting Christ's teachings and commandments.

Is He leading you? Are you following Him? Do you recognize His voice when you hear it? Are you even listening for it?

**"He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."**

**He leadeth me, He leadeth me,
By His own hand He leadeth me;
His faithful foll'wer I would be,
For by His hand He leadeth me."**

A group of shepherds were walking a large flock of sheep down a hillside one evening. As they got nearer each man called to his sheep and out of this huge mass the sheep moved to follow the voice they knew. They knew their shepherd and they followed him.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.**

**³ He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

**⁴ 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.**

**⁵ Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.**

**⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

The 23rd Psalm is one of the best-known passages in Scripture. It's only six verses long. Yet in those short six verses David describes God with such depth and power that entire books of theology can't even begin to touch it. In those verses David tells us truths about what God meant to him and what He can mean to us. And one of the most important Biblical truths he declared was this: **The Lord Is My Shepherd!**

Until we understand that simple truth nothing else in Scripture will make any difference. What David was describing here was a God who really cared for him.

A God who cared for him personally. A God who cared for Him Individually. David said, "the Lord is MY shepherd." He's not **A** shepherd. He's not even **THE** shepherd. The Lord **IS MY SHEPHERD**. Did you hear that? **The Lord is MY shepherd?**

Is the Lord YOUR shepherd? Is He ALL you want? Until you figure that out, you'll miss out on the best that God has to offer you. And one of the most important things God has to offer you is this: He has a plan for you. He has a purpose for you.

God KNOWS where you need to be, and if He is YOUR shepherd! He's going to take you there. When God is YOUR shepherd, He has a destination for you in His mind.

That's what Jeremiah 29:11 says: "**For I know the plans I have for you plans to prosper you and not to harm you says the Lord.**"

One person once said: "I don't fear death. I don't think I have ever been afraid to die. What I'm afraid of is this: that I will waste my life." **THAT I WILL WASTE MY LIFE.**

When the Lord is your Shepherd you know your life will not be wasted. You may not end up being rich or famous or successful. **BUT IT WILL MATTER THAT YOU LIVED** because God will make sure that your life matters.

Bible commentator William Barclay said "**There are two great days in a person's life – the day they are born and the day when they discover why.**"

God says... follow me and I'll show you WHY you were born. But here's the deal - in order for your life to be worthwhile you've got to follow HIM. He's knows where you need to go. But if you don't follow HIM... you may end up where you don't want to be. Following Jesus is a lifelong calling. It means adhering to his teachings and commands. We emulate his values, attitude, and actions. "Following Jesus" is a way of life.

This is Psalm 100:3, "**Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

The Good Shepherd knows His sheep.

John 10:27, **“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”**

When Jesus said to Peter and Andrew, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men,” they left their nets and followed him for a lifetime. To Matthew Jesus said simply, “Follow me,” and he got up and left his tax collector’s booth and followed Jesus.

Salvation is free – the price has already been paid. But how well are we doing at our vocation of following Christ? Are we like the Israelites as they followed Moses in the wilderness? Are we following Jesus better than they followed the pillars of fire and cloud?

The Israelites weren’t sure they liked where they were going, and they surely didn’t like the traveling conditions. They knew what they had been delivered from, but not what they were being delivered to. It was going to be a tough journey, made far longer and more rigorous because of their lack of faith. Following Moses meant they were going somewhere. They just didn’t know where.

Following Jesus means the same for us. We are following Him somewhere. Sometimes it’s not easy to follow him when we lack understanding.

John 6:66-68 reads, **“After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. So, Jesus said to the Twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”**

That’s still the answer today. “To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

Someone once said: **“When life gets hard, you don’t need reasons — you need comfort. You don’t need answers — you need someone.”**

God does not come to us with an explanation. He comes to us with His presence. He comes to us as a GOOD SHEPHERD! We hear His voice and we follow Him!

HYMN: “Amazing Grace”

**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.**

**The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word, my hope secures.
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.**

**Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.
His grace has brought me safe thus far;
His grace will lead me home.**

**When we’ve been there ten thousand years;
Bright shining as the sun;
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun.**

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Pastor Bidden by our Shepherd, let us come before His throne of grace in prayer on behalf of all people according to their needs.

Blessed Shepherd, You established Your Church with Your sacrificial death and mighty resurrection. Grant us devotion, that we may abide in the teaching of the apostles and honor the fellowship of the Church. Guard us against all enemies of Your Word, and keep us within the care of Your flock and staff forevermore. Lord, in Your mercy,

Congregation hear our prayer.

Pastor Mighty Shepherd, You hold in Your hands all the might of man, and You hold accountable those who would govern Your people. Grant to us good government and good leaders who will honor Your purpose, protect Your people, serve the cause of justice and defend our liberty against all threats. Give them wisdom and moderation in their pandemic response. Lord, in Your mercy,

Congregation hear our prayer.

Pastor Loving Shepherd, You loved the world enough to shed Your blood, and You desire that all would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Inspire and equip Your Church and her ministers to speak faithfully and boldly Your Word, and bless all those who serve us on Your behalf. Bless us especially when we are persecuted for the faith or suffer for the sake of the good that honors You and is obedient to Your Word. Lord, in Your mercy,

Congregation hear our prayer.

Pastor Merciful Shepherd, Your wounds are our healing and Your voice calls us to You in time of need. Hear us on behalf of all those who suffer in body or mind, who grieve those whom they love, and to whom death draws near. We pray especially for _____ and those we name in our hearts. Grant them healing according to Your will, grace to sustain them in the day of trouble, and hope of the new and everlasting life to come. Be with the unemployed and the distraught, and return them to health and livelihood. Lord, in Your mercy,

Congregation hear our prayer.

Pastor Gracious Shepherd, You seek out those who have fallen and restore the sinner to repentance. Send forth Your Spirit to rekindle faith in the hearts of those who have fallen away from the truth or who have been overcome by temptation and sin. Bring good from ill and increase in all the hunger for Your Word and a recognition of our need, that many may be gathered into Your flock when church doors are opened wide again. Lord, in Your mercy,

Congregation hear our prayer.

LORD'S PRAYER (spoken in unison)

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be 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
forever and ever. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Pastor The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

Congregation Amen.

SONG: "He Lives!"

I serve a risen Savior; He's in the world today;
I know that He is living whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer;
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today;
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart;
You ask me how I know He lives:
He lives within my heart!

In all the world around me I see His loving care;
And though my heart grows weary, I never will despair.
I know that He is leading through all the stormy blast
The day of His appearing will come at last.

He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today;
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart;
You ask me how I know He lives:
He lives within my heart!

Rejoice! Rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing:
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King.
The Hope of all who seek Him; the Help of all who find;
None other is so loving, so good and kind.

He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today;
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart;
You ask me how I know He lives:
He lives within my heart!

Alfred Henry Ackley

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