

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 25, 2021 – 10 am

## AS WE GATHER

Of all the animals that could have been used to portray humanity, does it feel strange to be called a sheep? After all, it is not the most honorable creature. There are no defense mechanisms to escape a predator, no intimidating roar, and limited ability to fend for one's self when it comes to seeking nourishment, water, and safety. Yet these things reveal the point we are called to understand. It may not be good to be a sheep on our own, but it is great to be a sheep with a Good Shepherd to care for the flock. Jesus is our perfect shepherd who protects and defends, feeds and nourishes, leads and provides all we need in this body and life. Together as His flock, we are blessed to follow Him as by His Word and Means of Grace He leads us to streams of living water and paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

## ✠ PREPARATION ✠

### HYMN

“I Am Jesus’ Little Lamb”

#740

- 1 I am Jesus’ little lamb,  
Ever glad at heart I am;  
For my Shepherd gently guides me,  
Knows my need and well provides me,  
Loves me ev’ry day the same,  
Even calls me by my name.
- 2 Day by day, at home, away,  
Jesus is my staff and stay.  
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,  
Into pleasant pastures leads me;  
When I thirst, He bids me go  
Where the quiet waters flow.
- 3 Who so happy as I am,  
Even now the Shepherd’s lamb?  
And when my short life is ended,  
By His angel host attended,  
He shall fold me to His breast,  
There within His arms to rest.

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## INVOCATION

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

**People:** Amen.

## CHILDREN’S SONG and MESSAGE

**OPENING SENTENCES** *1 John 3:16a, 24; John 10:11, adapted*

Pastor: Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
People: **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

Pastor: By this we know love,  
People: **that He laid down His life for us.**

Pastor: “I am the good shepherd,” says the Lord.  
People: **The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.**

Pastor: Whoever keeps His commandments abides in God, and God in him.  
People: **And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.**

**CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION** *Psalms 23; John 10:11*

Pastor: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
People: **Lord Jesus, our Good Shepherd, we confess to You that we have been ungrateful for all You give us to sustain our bodies and lives. Forgive us, Good Shepherd.**

Pastor: He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.  
People: **Like sheep, we are distracted and tend to wander and scatter. We forget who we are as baptized children of God and fail to respond to Your shepherding in our lives. Forgive us, Good Shepherd.**

Pastor: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.  
People: **We confess that in difficult times of life, we sometimes struggle to be confident in Your presence and protection, seeking to find our own comfort. Forgive us, Good Shepherd.**

Pastor: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.  
People: **As we journey through this sinful world, we overlook the goodness and mercy that flow into our lives from You. Forgive us, Good Shepherd.**

Pastor: Jesus, our Good Shepherd, hears our cries and says to us, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.” Receive the forgiveness won for You through Christ’s laying down His life and rising from death in victory. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
People: **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

☩ **WORD** ☩

**INTROIT** *Psalms 23; antiphon: John 10:14, 15b*

I am the good shepherd.  
**I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep.**  
The LORD is my shepherd;  
**I shall not want.**

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

**He leads me beside still waters.**

He restores my soul.

**He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

**your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

**you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

**and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

**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.**

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.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

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

**People: 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.

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

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

**People: Lord, have mercy.**

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

**People: Amen.**

## **SALUTATION**

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Pastor: Let us pray. Risen Lord, You are the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. They are Yours, and nothing will snatch them from Your hand. In the love You've shown and the perfect love we know through Your Spirit, empower Your flock to reach others, that all may be guided by Your shepherding grace; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**People: Amen.**

**FIRST READING** *Acts 4:1–12* (Peter and John witness before the council.)

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. And when they had set them in the 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 being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

**GRADUAL** *adapt. from Matthew 28:7; Hebrews 2:7; Psalm 8:6*

**Christ has risen from the dead.**

**God the Father has crowned Him with glory and honor,  
He has given Him dominion over the works of His hands;  
He has put all things under His feet.**

**EPISTLE** *1 John 3:16–24* (Love one another.)

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And this is his commandment that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. Whoever keeps his commandments abides in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

Lector: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

**VERSE** *Romans 6:9; John 10:14*

**Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. Alleluia. I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me. Alleluia.**

**HOLY GOSPEL** *John 10:11–18* (Jesus the Good Shepherd)

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the tenth chapter.

**People: Glory to You, O Lord.**

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 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 flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of 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 that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**      “The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want”      #710 v. 1-4, 5

- 1      The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want;  
         He makes me down to lie  
         In pastures green; He leadeth me  
         The quiet waters by.
- 2      My soul He doth restore again  
         And me to walk doth make  
         Within the paths of righteousness,  
         E’en for His own name’s sake.
- 3      Yea, though I walk in death’s dark vale,  
         Yet will I fear no ill;  
         For Thou art with me, and Thy rod  
         And staff me comfort still.
- 5      Goodness and mercy all my life  
         Shall surely follow me;  
         And in God’s house forevermore  
         My dwelling place shall be.

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**SERMON**      “Knowing the Good Shepherd” (John 10:11-18)

**CATECHISM**      *Explanation of the First Article*

Pastor: Shepherds provide for all the needs of their flock. Out of His love, our creating God provides not only for our spiritual needs of faith and forgiveness, but also for all that we need for our physical, emotional, and social well-being. Believing in God the Father as creator of all is the focus of the Small Catechism’s explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed, which we confess together:

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

Pastor: What does this mean?

**People:** I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them.

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life.

He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

This is most certainly true.

## PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

**Pastor:** Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

You are the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us out of love. Help us to hear Your voice, follow where You lead, and receive what You provide through Your grace and mercy; let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** **Good Shepherd and Lord, have mercy.**

**Pastor:** For the times we fear our enemies and the powers against us, remind us that we belong to You and no one can snatch us from Your hand. We bring before the Lord the part of Your flock here in this place and others whom we love in their time of need, [*especially* . . .]. Carry them as lambs in a shepherd's arms through the difficult paths ahead. Give all wisdom to know the faithful path we are to take, and shepherd us through every trial, trouble, and temptation; let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** **Good Shepherd and Lord, have mercy.**

**Pastor:** Give us courage that we not live in captivity to our fears; guide those who lead us in this and every land; provide peace, justice, and freedom for people everywhere. In our busy days, give us time to reflect upon the goodness of God and to experience joy in the security and peace You provide us, that we find contentment and peace in You; let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** **Good Shepherd and Lord, have mercy.**

**Pastor:** Protect and defend the members of our armed forces and the public workers who keep our communities safe. Defend us from our enemies, and teach us to rely on Your provision, the true protector of us all; let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** **Good Shepherd and Lord, have mercy.**

**Pastor:** That we do not forget those in need but share with all the Lord has entrusted to us and to display the kind of love shown and known that has no end; let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** **Good Shepherd and Lord, have mercy.**

**Pastor:** That we recall the saints of old, who put their trust in the Lord, that we also be found faithful when He returns in glory; let us pray to the Lord.

**People:** **Good Shepherd and Lord, have mercy.**

*Additional petitions may follow.*

**Pastor:** Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend ourselves and all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy through Your Son, the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**People:** **Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER** *Matthew 6:9–13*

**People:**       **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**    *1 John 3:16a; John 10:11; Hebrews 13:20; Numbers 6:24–26*

**Pastor:**       By this we know love,  
**People:**       **that He laid down His life for us.**

**Pastor:**       “I am the good shepherd,” says the Lord.  
**People:**       **The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.**

**Pastor:**       Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.  
**People:**       **Amen.**

**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.  
**People:**       **Amen.**

**Pastor:**       Alleluia! Christ is risen!  
**People:**       **He is risen indeed! Alleluia!**

**HYMN**            “Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us” #711

- 1     Savior, like a shepherd lead us;  
          Much we need Your tender care.  
          In Your pleasant pastures feed us,  
          For our use Your fold prepare.  
          Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
          You have bought us; we are Yours.  
          Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
          You have bought us; we are Yours.
  
- 2     We are Yours; in love befriend us,  
          Be the guardian of our way;  
          Keep Your flock, from sin defend us,  
          Seek us when we go astray.

Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Hear us children when we pray.  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Hear us children when we pray.

3 You have promised to receive us,  
Poor and sinful though we be;  
You have mercy to relieve us,  
Grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free.  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Early let us turn to You.  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
Early let us turn to You.

4 Early let us seek Your favor,  
Early let us do Your will;  
Blessèd Lord and only Savior,  
With Your love our spirits fill.  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
You have loved us, love us still.  
Blessèd Jesus, blessèd Jesus,  
You have loved us, love us still.

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