

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Our Good Shepherd

By This We Know Love

April 25, 2021



## 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.

We hear so many mixed messages of what love is. Popular songs from the past decades or even more contemporary ones tell of what love can and should be; poems, memes, and other influences also are commonly read and seen; even our own emotions and feelings strive to tell us what love is and should feel like. Despite all these mixed messages, our Lord tells us how we are to know real and perfect love. In our Epistle we hear, "By this we know love, that Jesus laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16). Today, we focus on the fact that as our Good Shepherd, Jesus has laid down His life for His sheep. By that sacrifice on the cross and Easter victory, we can rejoice in a perfect love that lasts and an unconditional love that forgives as our Good Shepherd continues to guide, lead, and direct us through all our days.

## ✠ PREPARATION ✠

### **PRAYERS OF PREPARATION:**

**Loving Shepherd, you know our names; you care for us. We seek and find you in Creation, O God, in the world you have made and the people you have called. When we face darkness and death, walk beside us. When we hunger for your love, fill us with your presence. When we are**

fearful, feed us at your table. Your vulnerable, powerful Lamb is our shepherd and guide, leading us to share the shelter of your abundant life. Let us recognize you here in the beauty of this afternoon and in its challenge; may the Risen One, your Shepherd-Lamb, lead us to act for your justice and peace: so that all may drink from your springs of the waters of life, and find their tears of sorrow and pain wiped away. In the name of the Risen One we pray: May we dwell in the house of goodness and mercy all the days of our lives. Amen.

### **WELCOME:**

**WELCOME TO GOD'S HOUSE:** May our souls be nourished as we graze in the green pastures of God's Holy Word. May we hear the call of our Shepherd, and allow His voice to lead from selfish ambition to the feast of grace. What an amazing day and what a fantastic opportunity for us all to come together to share in fellowship and praise. May we see today as yet another wonderful opportunity to draw ever closer to the Good Shepherd, His Grace and His Light. We pray that the words and love that you experience here today will continue to echo in your lives in the days and years that lie ahead. Come let us worship our God. Welcome!

### **SELECTION**

**Minister Terry Dale**

### **INVOCATION**

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

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

### **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**    *Psalm 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** ☩

## **SALUTATION**

**Pastor:** The Lord be with you.

**People:** **And also with you.**

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**Pastor:** Let us pray.

**People:** 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;**

**Pastor:** through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

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

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

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

**SELECTION**

**Minister Terry Dale**

**GRADUAL** *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.)

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

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

Leader: 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)

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

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

(The Gospel is read.)

Leader: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

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

**SELECTION**

**Minister Terry Dale**

**SERMON**

**SELECTION**

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**(We Bring Our Tithes and Offering To The Lord)**

**CATECHISM**

*Explanation of the First Article*

**Leader:** 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.**

**Leader:** 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

**Leader:** 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.**

**Leader:** 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.**

**Leader:** 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.**

**Leader:** 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.**

**Leader:** 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.**

Leader: 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.*

Leader: 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*

**BENEDICTION** *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!**

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