

Home worship service during time of isolation and social distancing.

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Good Shepherd Sunday

April 25, 2021

Jesus as the Good Shepherd has been a precious image for Christians throughout the ages. Possibly the earliest known depiction of Jesus is as a shepherd tenderly holding a lamb. We thank God that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep and that no one can snatch us out of His hand.

If you have small children, you may want to watch with them the reading of "Jon and the Little Lost Lamb" an Arch Book from CPH.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u29uCZKfGUg>

An Easter Salutation

adapted from 2 Timothy 1:10 & Psalm 118

L Christ is risen! Alleluia!

C Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

L Christ has destroyed death. Alleluia!

C And has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel. Alleluia!

L The Lord is my strength and my song. Alleluia!

C He has become my salvation. Alleluia!

L I will not die, but live. Alleluia!

C I will proclaim what the Lord has done. Alleluia!

L Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

C as it was in the beginning is now and will be forever. Amen.

L I will not die, but live. Alleluia!

C I will proclaim what the Lord has done. Alleluia!

L Christ is risen! Alleluia!

C Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!



1 The Lord's my shep - herd, I'll not want; He makes me
 2 My soul He doth re - store a - gain And me to
 3 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, Yet will I
 4 My ta - ble Thou hast fur - nish - ed In pres - ence
 5 Good - ness and mer - cy all my life Shall sure - ly



down to lie In pas - tures green; He
 walk doth make With - in the paths of
 fear no ill; For Thou art with me,
 of my foes; My head Thou dost with
 fol - low me; And in God's house for -



lead - eth me The qui - et wa - ters by.
 righ - teous - ness, E'en for His own name's sake.
 and Thy rod And staff me com - fort still.
 oil a - noint, And my cup o - ver - flows.
 ev - er - more My dwell - ing place shall be.

Public domain

L In the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

L Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C who made heaven and earth. (*Psalm 124:8*)

L Who can discern his errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

C Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. (*Psalm 19:12, 13*)

L If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord who could stand?

C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared. (*Psalm 130:3–4*)

L Let us, confess before God that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and as His people let us take refuge in His infinite mercy seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, saying:

C God, be merciful to me, a sinner, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

(*Luke 18:13*)

- L** Almighty God, merciful Father, in Your holy Church, You daily and richly forgive us our sins and grant us new life through Your Spirit. Be in our midst, enliven our faith, and graciously receive our prayer and praise; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
- C** Amen.

Introit Psalm 23; antiphon John 10:14, 15b

- L** I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- C** The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
- L** He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
- C** He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- L** 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.
- C** You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- L** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
- C** 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.
- L** I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |

Collect of the Day

- L** 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.
- C** Amen.

Acts 4:1–12

¹As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

⁵On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰let 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. ¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

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

L Christ has risen from the dead.

C God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor,

L He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;

C He has put all things under his feet.

Psalm 23 KJV

C The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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

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

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.

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

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

1 John 3:16-24

¹⁶By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

¹⁷But 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? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

¹⁹By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³And 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. ²⁴Whoever 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.

L This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 10:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Alleluia.

John 10:11–18

L The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 10th chapter.

C **Glory to You, O Lord.**

¹¹[Jesus said:] “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²He 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. ¹³He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶And 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. ¹⁷For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸No 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.”

L This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C **Praise to You, O Christ.**

C **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.**



1 The King of love my shep - herd is, Whose good - ness
 2 Where streams of liv - ing wa - ter flow, My ran - somed
 3 Per - verse and fool - ish oft I strayed, But yet in
 4 In death's dark vale I fear no ill With Thee, dear



fail - eth nev - er; I noth - ing lack if
 soul He lead - eth And, where the ver - dant
 love He sought me And on His shoul - der
 Lord, be - side me, Thy rod and staff my



I am His And He is mine for - ev - er.
 pas - tures grow, With food ce - les - tial feed - eth.
 gent - ly laid And home re - joic - ing brought me.
 com - fort still, Thy cross be - fore to guide me.

5 Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
 Thine unction grace bestoweth;
 And, oh, what transport of delight
 From Thy pure chalice floweth!

6 And so through all the length of days
 Thy goodness faileth never;
 Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
 Within Thy house forever!

Public domain

Devotional thoughts:

The last time I was in Israel, I was greeted by an unexpected surprise. On our way from Jerusalem to Jericho, as I gazed out the window, I was amazed to see a young Bedouin shepherd tending his sheep. He was walking on the side of a hill with his staff and his flock was following him. I can easily imagine Jesus witnessing similar scenes over and over again as he traveled the length and breadth of the Holy Land.

I often see sheep here in the countryside but they are always fenced in a pasture with no one around. But in the Holy Land and other parts of the world, tending sheep is a “hands-on” occupation.

The beloved Twenty-third Psalm describes this hands-on shepherding from the viewpoint of the sheep. When the Lord is my shepherd, I have no wants or cares that He does not meet. He leads me into pleasant pastures newly green. He overcomes my thirst with the crystal clear still water of life. He not only cares for my body and its constant needs, but He also comforts and restores my soul.

When the Lord is my shepherd, I fear no evil even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. He provides so abundantly for me that my table is prepared in the most trying circumstances and my cup runneth over!

But when Jesus tells us that He is the Good Shepherd, He goes beyond the Twenty-third Psalm. The Good Shepherd not only leads and guides the sheep. He not only feeds and cares for the sheep. The Good Shepherd LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE for the sheep! Imagine that! His love for the flock, His love for us, is so complete that He sacrifices His life for us! He does this because we are His own and He holds nothing back from us! It is no wonder that the early Christians loved the Good Shepherd imagery that Jesus shares with us in John chapter 10.

Because Jesus is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for us, goodness and mercy follow us all our days. More than that, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd but we certainly are not the good sheep. We wander and stray. We reject the goodness that He provides. But He never gives up. He is always there for us. He searches for us and restores us when we have found ourselves lost in the most desperate circumstances.

In Luke (Luke 15:4-7), Jesus told the Parable of the Lost Sheep in response to the Pharisees and scribes complaining that Jesus receives sinners and eats with them. It goes like this:

⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’”

This image of the Shepherd carrying the lost sheep on His shoulders was so precious to the early Christians that it became one of the very first graphic depictions of Jesus (You can see three examples of this at the end of this service.) People who had been raised in the debauchery and depravity of ancient Rome were comforted that the Good Shepherd did not reject them but found them and carried them home.

As our own age is determined to copy the immorality of Rome, many of us have also become lost and separated from the Good Shepherd’s flock. But no matter how far we have strayed or how deeply we have sunk into the pit of sin, the Good Shepherd is determined to find us and rescue us and carry us home.

He concludes this parable in Luke with these comforting words, “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7). The Good Shepherd has laid down His life for you. All heaven rejoices when those who were once lost are found. May we also rejoice when sinners repent and return to the fold as we look forward to dwelling in the house of the Lord forever with all the other lost little lambs carried home on the shoulders of the Good Shepherd.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

L Shepherd of Israel, in Your Son, Jesus Christ, You have sought out Your sheep and gathered us with them into Your flock. Keep us always in Your fold, and guard us from every wolf and snare.

C Amen.

L O God, as You breathed new life into the world through the resurrection of Your Son, so now by Your Holy Spirit breathe new life into Your Church that, freed by His Gospel, we may always confess the name of Jesus Christ, the only name given among men by which we must be saved.

C Amen.

L O Lord, our Shepherd, You calm all fears in this valley of the shadow of death, grant Your peace and comfort to those who approach the end of earthly life and await the time when they will be gathered into the Good Shepherd’s waiting arms.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. Protect all who attend to our needs during this time of national emergency and pandemic. We ask that you would quickly grant relief according to Your will.

C Amen.

C I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

C 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.

L Let us bless the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

L The Lord bless us, defend us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

C Amen.

I Am Jesus' Little Lamb Lutheran Service Book 740, Lutheran Worship 517, The Lutheran Hymnal 648



1 I am Je - sus' lit - tle lamb, Ev - er glad at
2 Day by day, at home, a - way, Je - sus is my
3 Who so hap - py as I am, E - ven now the



heart I am; For my Shep - herd gent - ly guides me,
staff and stay. When I hun - ger, Je - sus feeds me,
Shep - herd's lamb? And when my short life is end - ed,



Knows my need and well pro - vides me, Loves me ev - 'ry
In - to pleas - ant pas - tures leads me; When I thirst, He
By His an - gel host at - tend - ed, He shall fold me



day the same, E - ven calls me by my name.
bids me go Where the qui - et wa - ters flow.
to His breast, There with - in His arms to rest.

Good Shepherd Sunday

One of the most beloved images of Christ is Jesus as the Good Shepherd. As a result, one of the most cherished Sundays of the Church Year is Good Shepherd Sunday. Throughout the Church on this Sunday Christians rejoice in a caring and loving Savior who laid down His life for the sheep.

The Good Shepherd also reminds us that in Him there is only one flock, One Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. It is made up of all believers but only believers. Today, we have the opportunity to rejoice that we are part of that flock together with all believers in Christ around the world and throughout history. This One Holy Church is not limited to or bound by denominations. While God does not want us to cling to false doctrine at the same time we recognize that we are brothers and sisters with true believers in Christ wherever they are found and to whatever denomination they have attached themselves.

Pastor Quardokus

Here is a painting of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, located on the ceiling of the S. Callisto catacomb on the Apian Way in Rome. It was executed in about the year A.D. 250.



This painting of Jesus, the Good Shepherd is dated from about the year A.D. 200 and is located in the Catacombs of Domitilla in Rome.



This statue of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was also found in the Catacombs of Domitilla in Rome. It dates from about the year A.D. 300 and is currently located in the Vatican Museum in Rome.



Service Notes:

One person may serve as Leader or this may be shared with a number of individuals.

Read one or more of the lessons. Hymns may be sung or read. Use as much or little of this service as you would like.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Some liturgical portions are adapted from Lutheran Service Book © 2006 Concordia Publishing House.
Lutheran Service Book License: 10002731 Christ Lutheran Church, Stevensville, Michigan

Hymns are in the public domain. The remainder of this work including adaptations and the Devotional thoughts © 2021 Philip G. Quardokus. All rights reserved.

Enhancing Your Worship

Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27
My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

The Fourth Sunday of Easter

Good Shepherd Sunday

April 26 – May 2, 2021

Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Each Sunday has its own special theme directing us to meditate on God's word and actions. This theme is found in the Propers of the Day (the parts of the service that change week to week). From Advent through the Easter season these themes focus our attention on the life of Jesus from His birth to His death and resurrection. There is always much more in the propers than can be covered in any Sunday service. God willing, I will use the propers for Sunday to provide you with a devotion each day to help you mediate on what God has done for you.

Monday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Introit Psalm 23; antiphon John 10:14, 15b

- L** I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep.
- C** **The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want.**
- L** He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
- C** **He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.**
- L** 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.
- C** **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.**
- L** Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
- C** **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.**
- L** I am the good shepherd.
I know my own and my own know me, and I lay down my life for the sheep.

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

We have the privilege of hearing the Twenty-third Psalm twice in the service for this week, once, here in the introit and again as the Psalm of the Day. I never tire of the Twenty-third Psalm. I have read it at the bedside of many who were sick or dying. It never fails to bring comfort.

One of the most appealing aspects of the 23rd Psalm is its wedding of time and eternity. Most of life here on earth consists of our daily needs of food and drink, house and home, and clothing and shoes. The Shepherd provides them all. We also have emotional and spiritual needs. He provides them as well, so we need never fear enemies or even death.

But soon, the days of our lives here on earth come to an end. But the 23rd Psalm reminds us that even then, the Lord provides. Because the Good Shepherd has laid down His life for the sheep, we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!

- L** Let us pray. Lord, thank You for making us part of Your flock. Grant that with You at our side, we would never fear evil or even death, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Good Shepherd.
- C** Amen

Tuesday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- C** Amen.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 10:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
- C** Alleluia, Alleluia. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Alleluia.

Kyrie

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------|
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Christ, | C | Have Mercy on us. |
| L | O Lord, | C | Have Mercy on us. |

- L** 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.
- C** Amen.

One observation often made on Good Shepherd Sunday is that cattle are driven. Sheep are led.

Shepherds go in front of the sheep. The sheep never encounter anything that the shepherd has not already experienced and cleared the way.

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, leads us. He has experienced everything that we experience in life. When He laid down His life for the sheep, He led the way through the grave to the resurrection.

We now simply follow Him through the Valley of the Shadow of Death without the need for fear and trembling because we know that He will call us from the grave. In the resurrection from the dead, we will dwell with Him in the house of the Lord forever.

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. Amen.

Wednesday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
G Amen.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 10:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
G Alleluia, Alleluia. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Alleluia.

Psalm 23 KJV

- G** The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
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.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| L O Lord, | G Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | G Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | G Have Mercy on us. |

I must confess. Even with all of the modern translations available, I still prefer the King James Version when it comes to the Twenty-third Psalm and other familiar passages of Scripture.

In a sense, it shows my age but there are other important reasons for continuing to use the KJV. One reason is the translators of the KJV were exceptionally gifted in their use of language. In those days, almost all reading was done aloud. The King James Version of the Bible was meant to be heard.

I have discovered many modern translations seem to be perfectly fine when read silently to myself. But when I have been called upon to read them out loud in front of the congregation, an awkwardness of language soon appears.

But there is another, more important reason for continuing to use the KJV for the Twenty-third Psalm. It is known and familiar to Christians from almost every part of the English-speaking world and from every denomination.

In the Gospel for this week (John 10:11–18), Jesus says, “There will be one flock, one shepherd.” Whenever I attend or officiate at weddings and funerals, Christians from every kind of denomination are in attendance. They all know the Twenty-third Psalm from the King James Version. When we speak it together we underscore the truth of Jesus’ words that we are all one flock.

We may disagree on many areas of doctrine. We must never compromise the truth, especially when it comes to salvation by grace through faith for Christ’s sake. But the Twenty-third Psalm gives us the opportunity to express our unity of faith being in the one flock of the Good Shepherd.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for making us one flock of the Good Shepherd. Grant by the working of the Holy Spirit that we would also agree on the truth of Your Holy Word and the work of salvation done for us by Christ on the cross through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Thursday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 10:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.

C Alleluia, Alleluia. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Christ, **C** Have Mercy on us.

L O Lord, **C** Have Mercy on us.

Acts 4:1–12

¹As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

⁵On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰let 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. ¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

If you follow the news, you will have noticed that there is a new phenomenon in our society that has been dubbed the “Cancel Culture” by its critics. A recent example is the news that the Major League Baseball All-star Game has been moved from Atlanta, Georgia to Denver, Colorado. What is the reason? A vocal group of individuals in our country disapproved of Georgia’s new voter registration law and wanted to punish Georgia. They were able to convince Major League Baseball to move this annual classic. My intention is not to debate the rightness or wrongness of this move or whether the facts were properly presented and weighed. I simply want to point out that there is an intolerance for certain ideas in our country and some individuals are determined to weigh out retribution for those ideas.

While this phenomenon may be new to our country, it is not new to history. Examples abound. It occurred to me when I read in our lesson from Acts that the Sadducees were annoyed so they had Peter and John arrested.

What were they annoyed about? They were annoyed that Peter and John were proclaiming the resurrection from the dead. They wanted to cancel such nonsense so they had them arrested.

But the message of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was too powerful to cancel! In fact, the Sadducees’ attempt to cancel the message only emboldened and strengthen the resolve of Peter and John. They were able to say in the face of this criticism of Jesus, “There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Satan will never be able to cancel the message of salvation through faith in Jesus!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of salvation through Jesus' name. Grant to us the same boldness given to Peter and John that we may faithfully proclaim Jesus' resurrection from the dead through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday

L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 10:14

L Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Alleluia.

Kyrie

L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Christ,	C Have Mercy on us.
L O Lord,	C Have Mercy on us.

1 John 3:16-24

¹⁶By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.
¹⁷But 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? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

¹⁹By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; ²⁰for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. ²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. ²³And 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. ²⁴Whoever 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.

Do you find it hard to read 1 John? I do. How much should we love our brothers? John says that Jesus laid down his life for us so we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers! That's an incredible demand!

Ok, so we find it hard to follow Jesus' example and lay down our lives for fellow believers. What about helping them out with a little bit to eat and drink, something to wear, or someplace to live?

Oops! Maybe we are not doing so well there either. As I said, I find it hard to read these words from 1 John.

These words remind us how deeply sin infects the soul. Our natural tendency is to compare ourselves to others and then conclude, "I'm not that bad. In fact, I'm pretty good!" But John puts that thinking to flight. The proper comparison is for Christians to compare themselves to Jesus and His sacrifice for sin. When we do this, it becomes exceedingly apparent that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

John gives us good reason to continue to read the following verses in Romans 3, "and (all) are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith" (Romans 3:24-25).

John reminds us that as believing Christians, we still need forgiveness every single day of our lives. Thanks be to God, He grants us that forgiveness for Christ's sake.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the love that is ours in Christ Jesus. Grant that we would show that same love to brothers and sisters in Christ around us. When we fail, bring us to repentance and forgiveness through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Saturday

- L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

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

- L** Christ has risen from the dead.
C God the Father has crowned him with glory and honor,
L He has given him dominion over the works of his hands;
C He has put all things under his feet.

Verse of the Day: Romans 6:9; John 10:14

- L** Alleluia, Alleluia. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. Alleluia.
C Alleluia, Alleluia. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me. Alleluia.

Kyrie

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Christ, | C Have Mercy on us. |
| L O Lord, | C Have Mercy on us. |

1 John 3:23-24

²³And 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. ²⁴Whoever 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.

Faith and love are the two things that make up the Christian life. First, we are called to faith. This call leads us to repent of our sins and believe in Jesus' promises of salvation and the gift of eternal life. Faith changes us so that we are "born again" (John 3:5-7, Titus 3:5-7).

When we are changed, we love God and our neighbors around us. Faith and forgiveness are not reasons to reject God's commands but reasons to live them out in our lives. The Ten Commandments are God's model for love towards Him and one another. Breaking God's commands is proof of a lack of love. Keeping His commands is evidence of abiding in Him. It is evidence that He abides in us by His Spirit.

In this world, our faith and love are incomplete as demonstrated by 1 Corinthians 13. But in eternity with Jesus, our love will be perfect and complete. Until then, we live in faith under the cross trusting in God's mercy and forgiveness for Christ's sake.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of faith and salvation. Grant that we would live lives of love each day. When we fail, move us to repentance and forgiveness through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Enhancing Your Worship © 2021 Philip G. Quardokus. All rights reserved.