

Home worship service for

The Fourth Sunday of Easter
Mother's Day
Good Shepherd Sunday
May 8, 2022

On this Mother's Day we thank God for the gift of life granted to us by the care and nurture of our mothers. We pray for God to bless all mothers but especially we pray that Christian mother's would be given the wisdom and skill to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

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!

The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want

Lutheran Service Book 710, Lutheran Worship 416, The Lutheran Hymnal 436



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.

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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 78:70–72; 79:13; 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** **He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds;
from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people,
Israel his inheritance.**
- L** With upright heart he shepherded them
and guided them with his skillful hand.
- C** **But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will recount your praise.**
- 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. |

Gloria in Excelsis ~ Glory to God in the Highest

- L** Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
- C** **Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father: We worship You, we give You thanks, and
we praise You for Your glory.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, You are Lord and God, You are the Lamb of God:
- C** **Lord Jesus Christ, You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**
- L** Lord Jesus Christ, You are seated at the right hand of the Father; and we ask you to graciously receive
our prayer.
- C** **For You alone are the Holy One,
You alone are the Lord,
You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

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 20:17–35

¹⁷Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia,
¹⁹serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the
Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and

from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

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

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.

Revelation 7:9–17

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

- ¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
- ¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

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 10:22–30

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

C Glory to You, O Lord.

²²At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. ²⁴So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not part of my flock. ²⁷My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.”

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.

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

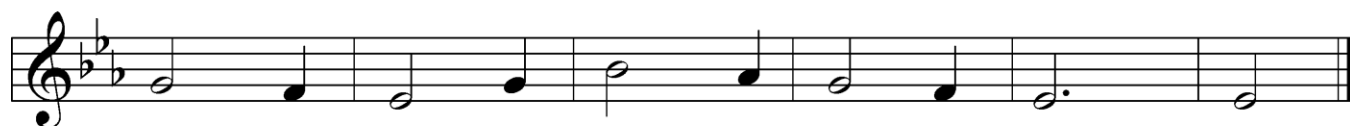
Lutheran Service Book 709, Lutheran Worship 412, The Lutheran Hymnal 431



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!

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Devotional thoughts:

Most of us love competition. We watch game shows and sporting events. We participate in competitions. I started playing baseball in "Peanut League" when I was very young. I recently watched my grandsons play soccer. We play competitive games at home. My twelve-year-old grandson laughed when I told him that I consistently lost to my six-year-old grandson when we played Mario Kart.

Today, in churches across our nation there is a colossal competition happening. It is a great competition between two topics for Sunday morning sermons, Mother's Day and Good Shepherd Sunday. I wonder which one will win.

I know some pastors who pride themselves on ignoring the secular calendar. They pay little attention to Thanksgiving and disregard Independence Day. In those churches, Mother's Day will hardly be mentioned. Other pastors pride themselves on being culturally relevant. For them, the secular always takes center stage over the sacred.

Then there are the cowards who try to do both. Count me among the cowardly.

(In the interest of full disclosure, for those following the one-year lectionary, Good Shepherd Sunday was last week. It is always the fourth Sunday of Easter in the three-year series. John 10 is the Good Shepherd chapter of the Bible. The three-year series divides it into three sections. We read the third section this year.)

Some images are etched so deeply into our memories that we will never forget them. One of those images for me is seeing my wife, Valerie, gently rocking a sick child and softly singing, "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb."

Mothers are equipped more than anyone to teach little lambs about the Good Shepherd. They know how helpless children can be and how much they need the Good Shepherd. I am particularly thankful for mothers like Valerie who tenderly model the Good Shepherd for children.

Our Gospel lesson for Good Shepherd Sunday this year finds Jesus at the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. We know this feast as Hanukkah. John tells us that it is winter. Hanukkah usually takes place in December. It celebrates the rededication of the temple in 164 B.C. following its desecration by the pagan Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes. You can read about this in 1 Maccabees 4:52-59 in what is known as the Old Testament Apocrypha.

The Jews came to Jesus with this question, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.” The key to recognizing Jesus as the Good Shepherd is recognizing Him as the Christ, the Savior of the world!

On this Mother’s Day, we thank God for Christian mothers who clearly teach their children that Jesus is the Savior. They read Bible stories to their children. They send them to Sunday school and where possible they send them to a Christian day school. Children with Christian mothers will never have to ask if Jesus is the Savior. They will know Him from childhood. If you had such a mother, pause and offer a prayer of thanksgiving for her.

Jesus is curt with the Jews. He knew their question was not offered in sincerity but only posed as an opportunity to entrap Jesus so they could arrest and kill Him.

His answer to them is one that we often give ourselves. Actions speak louder than words. Jesus said it this way, “The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me.”

Jesus answered messengers from John the Baptist in a similar way when they came with the question, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?” He said, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them” (Matthew 11:1-5).

On Mother’s Day, we all feel an obligation to pay tribute to our mothers. When we have been blessed with mothers who have tended to our needs of body and soul, Mother’s Day no longer feels like an obligation but a privilege! Actions speak louder than words!

The big problem with the questioning Jews is that they do not believe. They have refused to become part of the Good Shepherd’s flock. No matter how hard they pretend, Jesus can see the reality of their hearts. They chose to reject His voice.

It pains me when I see divided families. In a dysfunctional world, families should offer refuge from hurtfulness and acrimony. One of the most dysfunctional and divided families is found in the film Cinderella.

On Mother’s Day, it is important to recognize that just as in Cinderella, not everyone is privileged to be raised by a loving and caring mother who models the Good Shepherd. In John 10:15, Jesus tells us that the Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. Many of us have been raised in homes where mothers would gladly sacrifice themselves for their children. Unfortunately, some have been raised in homes where children are only seen as slaves—Cinderellas. Especially in these homes, children need to know that the Good Shepherd has come to rescue them from sin and evil.

Jesus told the Jews, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.” We will all face hardships in this world. There are many dangers and calamities from which even a loving mother cannot rescue us. But Jesus is always there for His little lambs! No one can snatch us out of His hand!

One day, He will take us out of this world of sin and hardship and give us the gift of eternal life. That is why He laid down His life for the sheep!

We have been raised in different earthly families. We have experienced a diversity of hardships and care from our mothers and fathers. However, we are all joined together in the family of our heavenly Father. We are one flock that listens to our Good Shepherd’s voice and follows Him. May we always rejoice in the love that He gives to us. May we always reflect this love to one another, especially in our families.

God’s richest blessings to you in Christ.

“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).

L Heavenly Father, Your Son, our Good Shepherd, purchased us with His blood, and He now leads us to our eternal home with You. As the sheep of His fold, move us to hear His voice gladly and to follow Him steadfastly.

C Amen.

L O Lord, You have provided us with the gift of family. Bless and protect all mothers. Bless those who have shown us a mother's love and nurtured our lives from childhood. Grant Your grace and mercy to all mothers that they may be moved to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

C Amen.

L O Lord, Bless and protect all mothers with child, all those who have suffered a miscarriage or the death of a child, and all those who have yearned for a child and lived with the pain of this unfulfilled longing.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, govern the kingdoms of this world according to Your holy and gracious will. Protect those in harm's way because of the war in Ukraine that continues to cause innocent men, women, and children to suffer. Curb what is evil and promote what is good among us wherever we live in this fallen world.

C Amen.

L Almighty God, send Your holy angels to watch over all of our loved ones, especially those who live in distant places. We thank You for the protection granted to all who have attended to our needs during this pandemic. As we are experiencing an increase in the number of new infections, continue to strengthen all those who serve us in the medical field. Give Your comfort and peace to all who are suffering from this illness or others. Be with those who mourn. Grant to them the hope and assurance of a blessed reunion in heaven.

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.

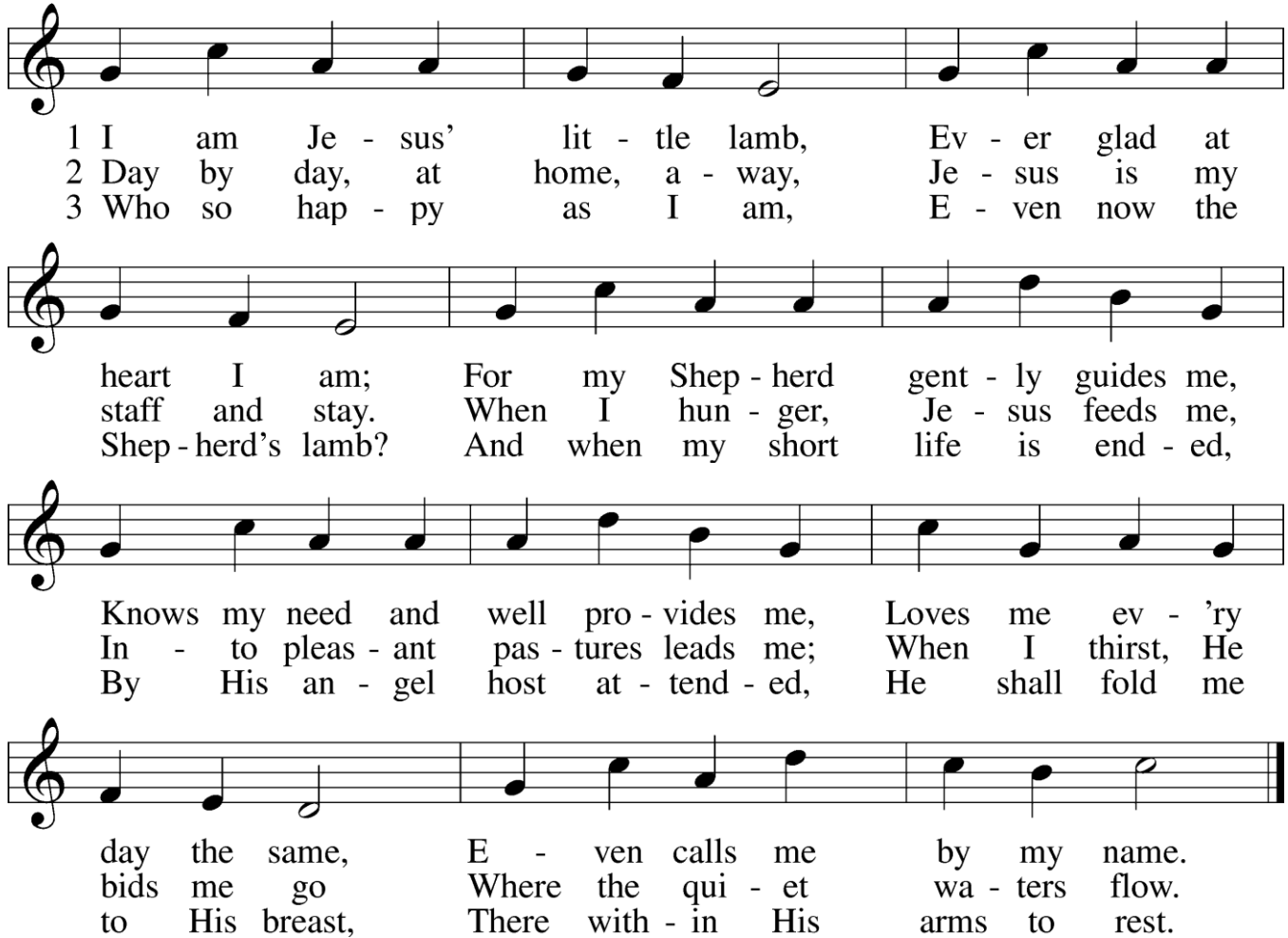
C Thanks be to God.

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.

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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.



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.

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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

May 9 – May 14, 2022

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 meditate 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 78:70–72; 79:13; 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** He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds;
from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people,
Israel his inheritance.
- L** With upright heart he shepherded them
and guided them with his skillful hand.
- C** But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever;
from generation to generation we will recount your praise.
- 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.

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

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

If you have been following along for a while, you may recall that I'm a fan of Sherlock Holmes. In addition, I have completed all of Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone Alphabet Mystery series. (Except for the last one "*Y*" *Is for Yesterday*. I am waiting to savor that one at some future date since Sue Grafton has died and there will be no more of her books.) To relax, my wife and I also like to watch Monk on television and many other mystery-type shows.

In almost every instance, the key to solving mysteries is paying attention to details. If you are a detail person, you may have noticed something interesting about our introit for this week. Look at it again. Does anything jump out at you?

Although our introit is short, it is a crazy quilt of verses from two psalms and the Gospel of John. Yet like any good crazy quilt, it makes sense. First, I noticed that the body of the Psalm is made from three verses of Psalm 78 and one verse of Psalm 79. Then I noticed that the antiphon is one and a half verses of John 10. To be specific, it is John 10:14 and the second half of John 10:15. Like any good detective, I had to investigate.

Looking a little deeper, I saw that the three verses of Psalm 78 are verses 70-72. How many psalms have 72 verses? There is only one psalm longer than Psalm 78—Psalm 119. It has 176 verses. Every other psalm is shorter than these two! Verses 70-72 are the last three verses of Psalm 78.

Psalm 78 is so long because it recounts "the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done" (Psalm 78:4). It begins with God's relationship with Jacob (who was later given the name Israel). It then tells the history of his descendants and God's interaction with them from the time of the Exodus until the time of David.

David was not the first shepherd in the Bible. That honor goes to Abel. Genesis 4:2 tells us, "Abel was a keeper of sheep." But David was the greatest Old Testament shepherd. He gave us the Twenty-third Psalm that begins, "The Lord is my Shepherd." In a real way, Psalm 78 directs us to Jesus who is "the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1).

David was called by God from tending sheep to shepherding God's people—the children of Israel (Jacob). But one day, a greater Shepherd would come—The Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd would deliver God's people in the same way that God had been with His people in the past. But this time, the Good Shepherd would lay down His life for the sheep!

Who are His sheep? We are! Psalm 79:13 reminds us that we are "the sheep of your pasture." We take up the task from generation to generation to "recount your praise."

I doubt that this is the first time you have heard of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. But there was a first time. You have learned of the Good Shepherd because someone from the previous generation has passed it on to you. Now it is our turn to hand down the message of salvation to the next generation just as Psalm 78 has been doing for centuries. May God grant us the wisdom and courage to fulfill this sacred calling.

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| L | Let us pray. Lord, we are the sheep of Your pasture. Move us to give thanks to you forever for our Good Shepherd. Grant that we may recount Your glorious deeds from generation to generation. |
| C | Amen |

Tuesday

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| 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.

Today, I saw an interesting banner proudly displayed from a home. It was a type of creed. It started, “This family believes:”

I would like to say that it then proclaimed the truth of salvation through faith in Jesus. Alas, it did not. In the middle of the banner, I read the statement, “Science is real.” The rest of the banner was filled with clichés of the political left. They mostly challenged exaggerated caricatures of their political opponents. Along with me, you have may have seen similar displays on the other side of the political spectrum.

What I found interesting was that the author felt compelled to include the statement, “Science is real.” By implication the banner was stating that anyone disagreeing with the sentiment displayed on the banner must be opposing science!

I’m not sure when science became a political football. I recently read two science magazines that featured political propaganda throughout. Politics seems to have permeated everything today. Some churches appear to exist for the purpose of serving political agendas.

In Jesus’ day, things weren’t much different. Everything was defined by politics. You either supported Rome or opposed Rome. Into this world came the Good Shepherd. He only made one political statement. When religious leaders and political leaders came together to trap Jesus, they asked, “Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” Jesus wasn’t so easily trapped. He asked, “Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin for the tax.” And they brought him a denarius. And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:15-22).

Jesus did not come to be a king. He did not come to promote rebellion. He did not come to support the establishment. Jesus came to be the Good Shepherd and to lay down His life for the sheep. St. Paul explains it this ways, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost” (1 Timothy 1:15). He came into the world to save sinners on the left. He came into the world to save sinners on the right. He came into the world to save sinners in the middle.

Remember the world and all of its politics will pass away but Jesus’ word will never pass away! (Matthew 24:35).

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.
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.

Psalm 23 KJV

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

KJV, RSV, ESV, NIV—The alphabet soup of Bible translations is much, much longer. I recently counted and I have access to six-two English Bible translations. I regularly consult four Greek versions, one Hebrew version, one Latin Version, and one German version. We are blessed with an embarrassment of riches when it comes to the Bible. So why do I still sometimes prefer the King James Version (KJV)?

Part of the answer is that when I was young, the RSV was relatively new. All of my memory work of Bible passages was in the King James Version. In addition, the version used by most churches and people was the KJV. That began to change in the mid to late 60s. Today, we seem to have gone overboard.

There are two other reasons why I sometimes still prefer the King James Version. First, it is still the most widely recognized and known translation. When you are with people from other denominations and called upon to speak the 23rd Psalm such as at a funeral, almost everyone is familiar with the King James Version of Psalm 23.

Second, a lesser-known reason is that when the King James Version was produced in 1611, most people read out loud. Silent reading was much less common than today. Of all the popular English translations, the King James Version was written with oral reading in mind.

I frequently think about this because I publicly read the Bible. Most often, I read the ESV or the NIV in church. I quietly read through the lessons as I prepare. Then sometimes I am surprised at how awkward it is to read the NIV or ESV out loud. My tongue gets tied or the sentence structure just doesn't seem right to my ear. That didn't happen nearly as often with the KJV.

I imagine that the translators heard every word of the KJV read out loud many times before it was printed. When awkwardness was discovered, the wording was changed so that the translation would be pleasing to the ear. Even though our language has evolved, you can still detect the pleasantness of the KJV when you hear it read out loud. The 23rd Psalm is one of the best examples.

Finally, I have read the 23rd Psalm countless times at the bedsides of the sick and the dying. I have read it at funerals and gravesides. I have read it in times of distress and hardship. Each time I read the 23rd Psalm, in a small way, I recall each time that God has used these words to bring peace and comfort to hurting people.

You may have noticed that I haven't commented on the message of the 23rd Psalm. There is very little that I could add that you probably don't already know about it. Rather, take a moment to slowly and deliberately read aloud the 23rd Psalm and allow God's words of comfort and peace to flow over you.

Psalm 23 KJV

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.

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 20:17–35

¹⁷Now from Miletus [Paul] sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, ²⁷for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. ³²And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴You

yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

This reading reminded me of Art and Margaret. I think of them from time to time because they were always such happy and positive people. But that isn’t what brought them to mind today.

Margaret had severe back problems and could no longer attend church. So I visited regularly in their home. They lived on a little out-of-the-way street. But when I went to visit them, I never had to look up their address. I simply drove down their block until I found the most immaculately manicured lawn that I have ever seen. This was Art’s handiwork. When I saw it, I knew I had found their house.

I drive on their block now and then. I think of them and wonder which house was theirs back in the day. I can’t remember. They all look the same. What would Art think if he saw the way his lawn looked today?

When you are gone, is there some legacy that you would like to leave behind? Is there something that you have done that you hope will outlive you and never change?

Our reading from Acts is Paul’s address to the Ephesian Elders. He knows that he will never see them again and wants to have a final word with them.

While he was in Ephesus, he was careful to share “the whole counsel of God” (verse 28). Now it will be their turn to care for the flock. He knows that after he leaves, wolves will attack the flock. They will be “men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples” (verse 30).

The legacy Paul wishes to leave behind is the truth of God’s holy word. That is the one thing that must never change. Faithful pastors must continue to teach the “whole counsel of God.” They must teach sin and grace, law and gospel. They must point to the Good Shepherd and the salvation He won for them on the cross. They must faithfully teach that the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep.

There was a time early in my ministry when I thought that we had turned the wolves away. They were wolves who taught that the Bible is simply a collection of myths that must be interpreted symbolically. Truth, they said, is not absolute. It is relative.

Wolves come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They all have one goal. They want to tear up the flock.

We are dealing with a new type of wolf. They no longer seek to destroy the “whole counsel of God” by calling it a collection of myths. Instead, they talk about God’s word as an allegory of life. They no longer ask the question, “What does this mean?” It is replaced with, “What does this mean for me?” For them, God’s word has become whatever they want it to be at the moment. With this approach, they make God’s word agree with the latest trend or political movement.

May we heed Paul’s final words to the Ephesian elders. May we never distort or compromise the word of God’s grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (verse 32).

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of Your holy Word. Grant that we would always be faithful in hearing and teaching Your word of truth through 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.

Revelation 7:9–17

⁹After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” ¹¹And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²saying, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- ¹⁵ “Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Many of us wonder about heaven. Some people like to read Revelation and ponder the future turmoil of earth. But I think Revelation is most popular because it tells us about heaven.

I have had the privilege of preaching to large and small congregations. When I served Hope Lutheran Church in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, I drove 90 miles every Sunday for the service. I never knew how many would be there. Twenty to thirty would be a large group. Mostly, the congregation numbered in the teens. On one occasion, only a single individual was in attendance. Another time, there were only two. Both of those events are memorable stories for another day. Yet they remind me of these words from Jesus recorded in Matthew 7:13-14.

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few”

In a real sense, we shouldn’t be surprised if those who find the way to life are few. Jesus cautioned us about that.

As I walk through a crowded store or attend a sporting event, I sometimes wonder whether these people will be in heaven. Will most of them be there? Or will it be just a few?

Revelation says that heaven will be full. Our reading from Revelation for this week tells us that there will be “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” Heaven will be full!

Where will all these people come from? They will come from every nation, tribe, peoples, and languages. Jesus is indeed the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! No one will be excluded because of their nationality, ethnicity, or language. Jesus died for all.

Like Hope Lutheran Church, attendance at your services might be small. Don’t let this discourage you. The worship services in heaven will be packed!

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for sending Your Spirit to lead us through the narrow gate that we may follow the Way that leads to eternal life. Thank You, also, for the great multitude of believers from all over the world who join us there before Your throne. Grant that we would not become discouraged because our earthly numbers seem to be few. Give us eyes to see the value of each little lamb for whom the Good Shepherd gave up His life. 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. |

Revelation 7:13–17

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?” ¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

- ¹⁵ “Therefore they are before the throne of God,
and serve him day and night in his temple;
and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.
¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;
the sun shall not strike them,
nor any scorching heat.
¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,
and he will guide them to springs of living water,
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

Will there be bicycles in heaven? I suppose that we’ve all heard questions like that. Well-meaning parents and pastors give a variety of noble answers to these questions. But the most honest but maybe less satisfying answer is, “We don’t know.”

But these verses tell us things that we do know for sure about heaven. We know that there will be no more hunger or thirst. That doesn’t sound like a big deal for most Americans. I’ve noticed we seldom talk about

Americans going to bed hungry anymore. Now we talk about food insecurity. Through the generosity of people and a variety of programs, most Americans have something to eat and drink most of the time.

When my father was fighting on the front lines of the Korean War, he came to know hunger. He never forgot that for the rest of his life. People who experience real hunger, never forget that experience.

Throughout most of history and in many parts of the world today, daily life is a struggle to provide food and shelter for the next day. For those people, a heaven where there is no more hunger or thirst sounds like a dream come true.

Where I live, we are having an unusual spring heatwave. If you have ever worked in scorching heat to provide food and drink for yourself and your family, you know how attractive an end to this hardship is.

Instead of scorching heat, there are springs of living water. Most of us have water piped to our homes. We often take it for granted. However, hiking all day through scorching heat makes a spring of water seem like the most welcome gift from God.

Sorrow is one of the heaviest burdens of all. We might be able to endure hunger, thirst, and heat when we know all is well with our loved ones. Yet sitting at a feast in an air-conditioned banquet hall means nothing when your heart is burdened with sorrow for loved ones. Food loses its taste. You have no appetite. Your surroundings are just a blur.

But the crowning gift of heaven is the gift of joy. God, Himself, will wipe away every tear from your eye!

How is this possible? The Lamb has given Himself for us so that we can live with Him forever in heaven. All these other amazing pictures of heaven are given so that we can grasp how wonderful it will be to live with God forever in paradise.

Prayer: O Lord, thank You for the gift of eternal life with You in heaven. Grant us grace to live our lives under the cross in view of the paradise that Jesus won for us. Amen.

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