

**April 25, 2021 Fourth Sunday of Easter
Service of Word and Prayer
Good Shepherd Sunday**

We are using parts of the Service of the Word liturgy this morning, from your green hymn book, the Lutheran Book of Worship, page 126. The prayers are based on Sundays & Seasons. Shut off all the distractions in your home.

Again this year as in 2020, you will need one item with wool in it today before this time together. Mittens, a pair of socks, a hat, a piece of material or actual skein of wool.

Perhaps print out copies of this for Enjoy the quiet for a bit – take in some deep breaths. Light your candle. May your family be blessed in this time together.

The Gathering

Greeting: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Call to Worship: Creator of earth and sky, of endless space and burning stars, we come together in the belief that we are important to you. You created us; you sustain our lives; you fulfil us with hope. We give thanks for the miracle of spring and for the power of new life within us and our world; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn: The Lord's My Shepherd -ELW 778 / LBW 451

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.*

On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

The Lord be with you ~ and also with you.

Prayer of the day: O God our shepherd, you know your sheep by name and lead us to safety through the valleys of death. Guide us by your voice, that we may walk in certainty and security to the joyous feast prepared in your house, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

CHILDRENS MESSAGE is a special video

The Word

The First Reading is from **Acts 4: 5-12**

Psalm 23, is found on page 225

The Second Reading is from **1 John 3:16-24**

Please rise for the gospel lesson. ***Holy, Holy, Holy, our hearts adore you. Our hearts are glad to say the words: you are Holy God.***

Gospel: **John 10: 11-18**

Adam lives in Africa. The people of his village know each other's sheep the way we might know one another's children. As he sat chatting with a group in the village, a person would stop by and say, "have you seen my sheep so and so ? identifying his own sheep by name. Even during the dark night he heard villagers calling out names.

They were calling their sheep. One man told Adam the next morning “They will all find each other.” He was speaking a deep truth. The power that really matters here is the power of relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. The response of the sheep depends on whose voice the sheep were listening to.

Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor notes that “sheep seem to consider their shepherds part of the family, and the relationship that grows up between the two is quite exclusive. They develop a language of their own that outsiders are not privy to.”¹

Our response depends on what we are plugged into listening to these days. *Whose voice do we listen to?* We have been taught to hear our parents, families, and perhaps our closest, trusted friends. We are relying heavily on the voices of our medical experts and I believe that their voices should be heeded.

After over a year of social distancing, people today are becoming restless, anxious, frustrated and worried. Some days are tougher than others to raise our spirits above the daily news. We are frightened of the world around us – “the virus”, other people, our work or lack of work, the demands and expectations placed on us. We fear for our lives and the lives of our loved ones. We fear for our own health.

The Psalm of David, is always our appointed psalm for the fourth Sunday of Easter, often known as Good Shepherd Sunday, speaks to the issue of fear. David goes on to write, that even though he walks through the darkest valley, he is not afraid because he has a sense of God’s presence. He says “for thou art with me.” He conquered his fear because he realized that he was not alone. God was with him. As with David, we too can conquer our fears when we realize we are not alone.

Touch the piece of wool material in your hands. It reminds us that sheep sacrifice their wool so that we can create things like clothing and

blankets to keep us warm. Christ sacrificed his life for us. Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly!” Abundant life; this is Jesus promise for us. To have abundant life means to know we are not alone; to know the voice of the good shepherd and to trust in him; to know the difference between false hope and the real hope that abundant life can only give. To know this is to have faith.

The image of shepherd reminds us that God is especially concerned for those at risk, those who are vulnerable. Sheep are lost without the constant, vigilant care of their shepherd. Our assurance is based not on what we do or do not do, but on what Jesus does in his role as the Good Shepherd. This is a strong word of reassurance to us in our daily struggles to be faithful. In our choices each day as we practice our faith by saying yes to some voices and saying no to others, Jesus is there, going before us and leading us. Amen

Hymn: Have No Fear Little Flock - ELW 764 / LBW 476

Our Response

OFFERING PRAYER Gracious God, receive our gifts as you receive us. You walk beside us and you meet us in hunger with bread from heaven. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ our saving grace. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People by Jeff Kargus

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

A brief silence.

Loving Shepherd, you know your own and your own know you. Your voice calls us to your loving embrace. Strengthen your church throughout the world that we bear witness to your expansive love. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious Shepherd, you are generous with the gifts of goodness and mercy. Restore your creation to wholeness so that cities and towns, countryside and wilderness, may abound with life. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Hope-giving Shepherd, the nations and peoples are your heritage. Place into the hearts of all leaders and rulers the passion to serve. Crucify any desire to overpower others and give leaders joy in lifting up the lowly. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Abiding Shepherd, your love flows as we reach out to those around us. Move us with your Spirit, so that we lay down our lives for those in need. We pray for those who are ill. Help us love one another in truth and action. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Saving Shepherd, you restore us to wholeness. Help our community in our life together and give us vigor as a people of faith. In the midst of challenges and opportunities, fill us anew with you Holy Spirit. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Eternal Shepherd, you hold us securely in your loving hands. In the assurance of resurrection hope, we remember our loved ones who have died in you. Bring us, with them, to dwell in your house forever. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The peace of Christ be with you always and also with you.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray **The Lord's Prayer:**

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.

Hymn: Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us -ELW 789 / LBW 481

Benediction

God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter keep you in peace. Amen.

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is Risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia.**
Go in peace. and share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**